



WESTERN EUROPEAN COSTUME  
VOLUME II









# WESTERN EUROPEAN COSTUME

SEVENTEENTH TO MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

*And its Relation to the Theatre*

BY

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ENGLISH COSTUME OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (with JAMES LAVER)

ENGLISH COSTUME OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (with JAMES LAVER)

ENGLISH COSTUME OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE AGE OF ELIZABETH; ENGLISH COSTUME OF THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

ENGLISH COSTUME OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

ENGLISH CHILDREN'S COSTUME 1775-1920

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH COSTUME 1066-1900



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*By the Same Author*

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## INTRODUCTION

BY the beginning of the seventeenth century the theatre was a recognized amusement of kings and princes throughout Western Europe. And although still regarded with disfavour by the Church, it was a sufficiently established feature to be the inspiration of the cleverest and most gifted writers of the day. In this manner the present volume differs from its forerunner. Whereas, in the first volume, all authors whose work might ultimately be altered or adapted for theatrical production were mentioned, as actual playwrights were few, in the period covered by this, the most gifted and accomplished writers of the time had turned their attention to the writing of plays, with all the fervour and enthusiasm aroused by a new outlet for dramatic talent.

As every notable artist or author has had hundreds of lesser brains who strove to mimic and copy his themes and subjects, style and technique, so each playwright of original ideas and unusual outlook has had his satellites. And although the names mentioned in these pages are comparatively few, there are numerous inferior but similar writers of every period in every country, so numerous indeed, that it would be impossible to discuss even their most meritorious works in a slender volume like this. It must follow, then, that only those dramatic authors of admitted brilliance and leadership have been mentioned, and only their most famous works catalogued. The purpose of this book is mainly to depict costume in accurate detail. Its relationship to the stage is of secondary im-

portance to its actual value as a record of contemporary fashions and features.

We get four distinct types of theatrical amusement during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*, the Spanish drama, French heroic tragedies, and light comedies and ballet.

The *Commedia dell' Arte*—or the Italian Comedians—consisted of troupes of wandering players, each figure with a traditional name and costume. Their plots were for the most part thin and futile; their success relied entirely on the ludicrous representation of human follies and weaknesses. Parts were not learned, for each actor improvised as the play progressed, but the characters nevertheless became familiar and well-beloved figures. Their vulgar and coarse buffoonery was everywhere welcomed by the people as a pleasant and amusing distraction. As their popularity increased towards the end of the seventeenth century several playwrights endeavoured to introduce similar comic figures into their own works.

In Spain drama was rich with violent and blood-curdling excitements, swashbuckling coarseness, and enthralling love-interests. The Moorish strain lent colour to these exciting dramas, and the voyages and the conquests of Spanish history provided absorbing and fascinating themes.

The French tragedies were a curious mixture of pseudo-Greek and Roman fiction and contemporary fact. French dramatists were obviously influenced by the ancients and tried to follow the dramatic rules laid down by Euripides. Their plots might be borrowed from varying sources, but their characters were all given names of figures in classical history, and during the eighteenth century all these tragedies were played in classical costumes.

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French comedy took the form of satirical mockery of the modes and habits of contemporary life, and was occasionally accompanied by a ballet. Ballet arrived as a new interest during the second half of the seventeenth century, and schools of dancing quickly turned the ancient chorus into an elegant background of dancing men—and later, women—who appeared between scenes to relieve the boredom of the audiences while the rather cumbersome scenery was being changed.

The encumbering fashions of the late seventeenth century were obviously unsuited to women dancers, and the stiff embroidered garments were discarded in favour of Greek draperies—a daring departure from petticoats. Later these diaphanous draperies were replaced by fantastic pastoral dresses and abbreviated versions of the gowns worn at the French Court. Several of these amusing and unusual *ensembles* have been depicted in the following pages.

These various types of plays were imitated with varying success by Germany and Holland. The German temperament, however, was curiously unsuited to French tragedy, to Spanish drama, or to Italian comedies, and it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that Germany eventually produced noteworthy dramatic works of her own.

Dutch costumes frequently appear in the reproduced drawings. There were, it is true, no particularly well-known or clever Dutch playwrights, and consequently the performances in Holland were mainly imitative productions of foreign plays, yet the influence of Dutch fashions, especially during the seventeenth century, was widespread. The Quaker styles and fashions were considered less fantastic and more serviceable than the Parisian models adopted in England, France, and Germany.

France undoubtedly became the leader of fashion during the eighteenth century, and after that date it will be noticed that feminine costumes in other countries cease to bear an obvious style of their own.

Certain differences in details persist, but the general tendency is to follow more and more the dictates of Paris.

It is my sincere hope that the profuse illustrations in this book will help to give a much clearer idea of details, shape, ornament, and design than could be gathered from a lengthy and possibly boring description in the text. Such items as hairdressing, corseting, hoops, and panniers and the construction of complicated head-dresses need the help of a verbal explanation because in a drawing it is not possible to show clearly and from all angles those things that demand a framework other than the natural form beneath and the more obvious arrangements of certain draperies.

Colour has been suggested in the sixteen colour-plates, but texture and types of materials are dealt with more fully in the text.

The patterns illustrated are not merely casual decorations, but have all been based on contemporary *motifs* of each period, if not actually copied from original designs. The producer would be wise to follow roughly the styles of designs drawn in these pages, as often a too modern pattern may spoil the general effect of an accurately made garment.

Fashions in design are inseparably linked to the history, geography, and architecture of each period, and pastoral simplicity in patterns only occurs when the particular country in which those patterns are produced is luxuriating in a period of peace and plenty. In much the same way we can find the effects of wars reflected in the military styles

## INTRODUCTION

adopted by women and children of the period in which they occur. The over-decorated furniture and architecture of the time of Louis XV and Louis XVI is again reflected in the exaggerated styles affected in fashions of those years. The gilt and spindly fragility of the Empire buildings and furnishings is inseparably linked to the clinging lines of the Empire gowns, and the pseudo-Greek and classic styles adopted by the ladies of that time.

The most stiff and stilted fashions were more often efforts to imitate some eastern style which appeared amusing to the jaded fancy of a lady of fashion than an outward expression of straight-laced ideals or morals. While the extremest *décolleté* and negligent fashions were more often than not an effort at simplicity after an orgy of over-decorated and ostentatious gaudiness, nevertheless these 'simple' fashions usually coincided with a period of general slackness—both of manners and person.

Although the illustrations and their descriptions continue into the nineteenth century, this short period is only introduced to round off the possibility of productions recurring some forty years after they first appear. The whole outlook towards the theatre altered so considerably during the early years of the century that to refer to nineteenth-century themes and playwrights would immediately plunge us into a new world altogether. There have been several books written about the theatre of the nineteenth century, and this period cannot be dismissed with a few explanatory notes. It is considerably simpler, then, to close the dramatic side with the finish of the eighteenth century, when historical plays had at last become costume pieces, and the theatre a well-established feature of practically every country—a recognized amusement of not only the Court and the wealthy, but of the people.



One more point of definite value must be stressed—indeed, too much emphasis is impossible—every would-be designer or producer of period plays must remember that exaggeration is a very necessary quality in theatrical costume. Each particular peculiarity of any given date should be singled out and enlarged upon slightly—hoops built a trifle larger so that waists appear smaller; high head-dresses accentuated, frilled cuffs or puffed sleeves frilled or puffed just a little more than seems necessary; colour-contrasts just a little more brilliant and crude than they might have been; embroideries and decorations made larger and more obvious. So many truly lovely costumes have been dwarfed and rendered inconspicuous when they appeared upon the stage by too much attention to small detail and not sufficient concentration on shape and colour—the two most important factors in all theatrical production.

## THE THEATRE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

OPERATIC drama and the *Commedia dell' Arte* vied with each other for supremacy throughout the seventeenth century.

The Italian theatre is inseparably linked to the *Commedia dell' Arte*, and its popularity lasted well into the eighteenth century. These actors, who never learned a part, frequently were only made familiar with the play in which they were to act on the day on which it was produced. They fooled and improvised as much for their own amusement as for the interest of the audience. They were immediately popular, their troupes being welcomed all over Europe.

It is impossible to ignore their very real effect on the stage of the seventeenth century, although their place in the modern theatre has degenerated to the clowning in the Christmas pantomimes.

It was probably due to the very crude and lascivious acting of the Italian women—who, in these plays, always took the part of unfaithful wives—that we find no woman on the stage until the end of the seventeenth century in any country except Italy.

In 1600 Philip III of Spain complained of the behaviour of the actresses in the troupe of Italian players brought over by Alberto Gavasa, and the result was a law prohibiting women from appearing on the stage. Curiously enough, the general feeling in Spain at this time was considerably divided in its reaction to the theatre. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Cervantes and

Lope de Vega were both writing plays which were produced and appeared to be exceedingly popular, especially the work of the latter. Calderón also had started on the road to dramatic success and popular approval before 1635. Nevertheless Lope de Vega on his death-bed was persuaded to confess to the mortal sin of having written for the stage. So that although this period in Spanish dramatic history is richer by its three most brilliant contributors, their popularity during their lifetime was severely threatened by the disapproval of the Church.

Calderón, who was born in 1601, wrote delightful plays greatly influenced by the romantic works of Cervantes. The last barrier of ecclesiastical condemnation of the theatre must have been broken down when he himself entered the Church. Always religiously inclined, Calderón took holy orders during the later part of his lifetime, but he was not allowed to neglect his dramatic talents in the fulfilment of his religious obligations.

Philip IV insisted that he should remain at Court as a religious adviser as well as a playwright and theatrical manager, and it was under this monarch's approval that the Spanish theatre reached its highest standard.

Philip IV was passionately fond of the theatre, and innumerable dramas appeared under his patronage. He himself was supposed to have written several, quite probably with the assistance of Moreto, a gay and comic dramatist who flourished at that time.

The courtyards, which had previously served as both stage and 'pit,' with the windows of the houses let out as boxes to the grandees, gave place to theatres with built-up stages and a variety of scenic effects in lighting and perspective scenery. Such effects had previously been attempted only by the Italian and French theatres.

Calderón was first summoned to the Court of Philip IV on the death of Lope de Vega, and it is a great misfortune that this very clever playwright was far more interested in his career in the army, and later the Church, than in his undoubted ability to produce delightful romances, for he neither collected nor published his own productions, but left them in the hands of others who afterwards published a number of plays under his name so altered that he himself could not recognize them. It has been said that Calderón turned dreams into flesh and blood, and his themes, even distorted as they are supposed to be, remain charming romantic fragments. He wrote a play for each celebration of the King's birthday, as well as many others. *The Combat of Love, Jealousy, and The Lady and her Maid* are all worthy examples of the one hundred and eleven plays which he admits as his own.

With Calderón's death in 1681 the Spanish theatre fell into decline, and since that date very little of merit has been conceived by Spanish dramatists until modern times. The dramatic and theatrical energies of the Italians during this period were wholly taken up with the *Commedia dell'Arte* on the one hand, and the opera, with its impressive and grandiose scenery and lighting, on the other. Indeed, after 1650 both the French and Italian theatres suffered considerably from the concentrated striving after stage-effects—to the real detriment of the players.

It was not really until the eighteenth century that Italy once more became the home of several very clever dramatists.

Obviously, then, it was left to France to make real progress in dramatic achievement. Corneille (1606-1684), Racine (1639-1699), and Molière (1622-1673) are the three greatest names in seventeenth-century dramatic French

history. There are of course many lesser dramatists who followed the lead of these three masters. Unfortunately most of the French dramatists of the seventeenth century concentrated all their efforts on what they considered were the classical rules in dramatic productions. This cult completely obliterated any efforts at contemporary themes, which for our purpose might have been very much more interesting.

Corneille wrote one contemporary comedy, *Le Menteur*, which was taken from one of Lope de Vega's plots. His other works were all heroic tragedies, the most famous of which include *Le Cid* (1636), *Horace*, *Cinna*, *Polyeucte* (produced between 1640 and 1643), *Pompée* (1643), *Rodogune* (1644), *Nicomède* (1561), and a heroic comedy *Don Sanche d'Aragon* (1650). When these plays were first produced, the actors were actually dressed in the contemporary fashions, but later during the eighteenth century classical Greek or Roman draperies were invariably worn.

Corneille was extremely popular during his lifetime. Obviously his tragedies satisfied the public demand for rather crude thrills, but Corneille certainly borrowed unblushingly from the works of the Spanish dramatists, though he disguised his characters in the garb of Ancient Rome.

Racine, on the other hand, refused to read the works of other great men and concentrated wholly on the production of pseudo-Greek plays of the accepted form of climactic brevity, viewing things entirely from the psychological aspect. The originality of this viewpoint proved an amazing success, and Racine still ranks as one of the most brilliant playwrights of France. In 1664 he wrote his first tragedy *Thébaïde*, which was succeeded by *Alexandre*, *Andromaque*, and a comedy, *Les Plaideurs*, in 1668. *Bérénice*,

*Bajazet*, *Mithridate*, and *Phèdre* are among the later tragedies. As with Corneille these plays, though of pseudo-classical inspiration, were acted during the remaining years of the seventeenth century in contemporary clothes, and during the eighteenth became established as Greek costume plays.

As true recorders of seventeenth-century manners, Molière, and Regnard in a lesser degree, have left us a variety of intensely amusing and enjoyable light comedies.

With wonderful perception, Molière succeeded in recording the absurdities and pretensions of the professional classes of his time and, with a relentless and damning penetration, proceeded to expose them for the hyper-critical humbugs that they were.

Jean-François Regnard, who wrote his first comedy in 1696, was not so accomplished, nor was his satire so biting. His comedies are considerably lighter than those of Molière but, nevertheless, they are full of action and brightness.

Molière and Regnard were the two outstanding comic playwrights of the seventeenth century, and their popularity has outlived the modes and manners on which they based their comedies. Molière's satirical frivolity and his obvious ridicule of the professional quacks of his time are not only contemporary skits, but charming and amusing situations, whose humour never dates.

His most popular comedies and their approximate dates of production are: *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659), *L'Ecole des Maris* and *Les Fâcheux* (1661), *Le Misanthrope*, and *Le Médecin malgré lui* (1666), *L'Avare* (1668), *Tartufe* and *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669), *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670), *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1671), *Les Femmes savantes* (1672), and *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673).

Louis XIV of France encouraged dramatic enterprise

and ability even more than Philip IV of Spain had done. He interested himself particularly in ballet, and at a period when only men appeared on the public stage, he made his début at the age of thirteen in *Cassandra*. Later, his interest extended further, and to encourage a greater public interest in acting, singing, and dancing, he issued letters-patent in 1672 which authorized "the faithful and well-beloved Jean-Baptiste Lully to add to the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, a school suitable to educate pupils as much for dancing as for singing, also to train bands of violins and other instruments."

This encouragement of dramatic art induced several women to take lessons under Lully's instruction, and in 1681 the first professional women dancers appeared on the French stage. Although 1681 was the earliest date in France for professional actresses, noblewomen had taken part in the Court masques for a considerable number of years.

It was at the end of the seventeenth century that the troupes of Italian actors were expelled from Paris for the unforgivable sin of presuming to produce a play entitled *La Fausse Prude*, which was an undisguised attack on the manners of Madame de Maintenon. This temporary banishment—they were recalled in 1716—seemed to excite a further interest in the traditional costumes of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and we find many of the Italian figures creeping into the French productions of this period.

Throughout the seventeenth century Germany was making rather futile and colourless efforts to follow both the Spanish and the French theatres, the impossibility of the German temperament to grasp either the 'light, fantastic' touch of the French players, or the romantic, oriental 'blood and thunder' of the Spanish dramatists

rendered their attempts both ludicrous and clumsy. While France, England, and Spain were all producing an excellent quality of dramatic art in their separate styles, Italy and Germany floundered behind, probably for want of a capital in which to concentrate their local talents.

Although he is a German himself, Schlegel, in his *Dramatic Literature*, speaks of the "pitiful condition of the theatre in Germany at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries."

The Germans apparently contented themselves with the production of 'wretched imitations' after the worst type of French pastoral plays, which were popular for no other reason than that they were the only dramatic efforts to be found in seventeenth-century Germany.

It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller eventually rescued the German theatre from mediocre insipidity.



## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS

THE clothes worn during the seventeenth century in different countries present striking differences, even more noticeable than those of the preceding centuries.

Indeed, there seems to be no other period in the history of costume like that of the years from 1620 to 1660, when nations clung so tenaciously to their accepted styles of dress, refusing to be influenced by the Court fashions.

France made the most marked strides in breaking away from the stiff old styles of farthingales and bombasted and padded limbs, stiff ruffles, and tight waists. Indeed, the French fashions were entirely revolutionary during the 'twenties. A sudden abandonment of all the established stiffness and bombast set in, and the new styles, that must have shocked the straight-laced veteran, called for softly curling tresses, high waists, full loose skirts, and dainty ribbons and lace. Men's fashions were equally sudden in their changes. Fashion had, with one mighty stroke, pricked the bubble of bombast and in the process had revealed the endless possibilities of folds and draperies.

By about 1625 not one item of French apparel resembled the fashion of ten years before. The silhouette, both male and female, had undergone a complete change. Abraham Bosse has left us a very comprehensive collection of prints of these times which show the excesses and absurdities which quickly followed the introduction of informality in clothing.

Frizzed and curled locks tied with bows of ribbon in unexpected places and gigantic hats with small crowns and cart-wheel brims weighed down with ostrich feathers



SPANISH

DUTCH  
(1630)

FRENCH

Fig. 1

replaced the close-cropped heads with their high-crowned hats of a decade ago. Materials, from being heavy, stiff, and unresisting, were now soft and diaphanous in texture. The sausage-like distension of the breeches and sleeves collapsed limply into a froth of lace and ribbon. The breeches of the 'twenties were split from knee to mid-



FRENCH

DUTCH  
(1630)

SPANISH

Fig. 2

thigh and contrasting linings hung out over the garter at the side. The new coats or doublets were cut short to the waist and finished with a row of flaps. Sometimes, indeed, the jacket was little more than an apology for a coat and consisted of a series of ribbons attached at intervals and





showing a contrasting lining. The waist-line was high and usually ornamented by a series of rosettes of ribbon at intervals of two or three inches. Stiffened lace collars, curved into an arc from shoulder to shoulder, framed the face, and later, when the hair became even longer, fell back over the shoulders.

The Frenchwoman cast aside her farthingale and stomacher, and with an almost audible sigh of relief adopted a higher waist-line, softly falling skirts, and a multitude of ribbons and lace in place of starch, whalebone, and gems.

The neatly piled head-dresses—cruelly drawn away from the face—were replaced by impudent curls that clustered over each ear, and the forehead, which for so many years had remained bare, could now be veiled with a row of curls or a fringe. Gone were the gem-studded wigs, and now the only decoration for the hair was bunches of ribbon or a flower.

Finely worked lace, silken ribbons, and strings of pearls, pastel shades, and dainty-patterned materials of cobweb consistency now graced the halls of France.

France, however, remained for several years the only addict to her own styles. The stiffness that characterized Queen Elizabeth's time was general throughout Western Europe, and this, coupled with the lasting quality of the heavy, well-made materials and the vast quantities of expensive ornaments that had been lavished on suits and gowns during the sixteenth century, helped to keep the creaseless, doll-like fashions of a past age in sharp contrast to the softer and more becoming styles of the French Court.

By 1630, however, we find that these styles are accepted by most of the Courts in Western Europe, with the exception of Spain and Portugal—but this applies to the Courts alone, and that with certain reservations.



DUTCH (1615)

Fig. 3

Spain and Portugal clung with tenacious adherence to the fashions of the sixteenth century. Even as late as the 'sixties farthingales were still to be found in the Spanish Courts. Samuel Pepys writes of the absurd farthingales worn by the Portuguese ladies who arrived in the Queen's train in 1662. Although these exaggerated court-fashions are more reminiscent of the hooped skirts of the eighteenth century in shape, they were nevertheless the exaggerated outcome of the original suggestion in the Spanish vertingale of the late sixteenth century.

Spanish fashions for ladies altered hardly at all for a period of eighty years. Clothes worn in 1560 could apparently be easily worn as late as 1640 with little or no alteration.



SPANISH (1622)

Fig. 4

There was a little more acknowledgment of the prevailing fashions in men's attire, but even here the bombasted breeches and slashed sleeves, padded shoulders and hanging sleeves, and a preference for short hair lasted well into the 'thirties.

Dutch fashions during the first quarter of the century adopted and adapted the tight, boned stomachers, pinched waists, padded hips, full skirts, lace bonnets, ruffles, and stiff collars, which became



the foundation of their so-called national costume. Even in these ultra-civilized days, there are still to be found a few adherents to these styles in various parts of Holland.

The farthingale itself was abandoned in every country except Spain and Portugal during the 'twenties, but those who still clung to the established fashion for hips obtained the effect with the assistance of a horseshoe-shaped roll of horse-hair which was tied round the waist beneath the petticoats.

Dutch ladies kept to the old style of high-crowned black hat, which was more often than not worn over a close-fitting lace cap. They were still wearing these in the 1660's in preference to the large, soft-brimmed hats favoured by the majority of countries at that date. After a tentative experiment in French modes, Holland broke away and introduced several new and very charming styles entirely of her own design.

Chief among these Dutch modes was that for becoming little caps and hats, close-fitting and usually made of lace or fine lawn. This



DUTCH (1620)

Fig. 5

## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS

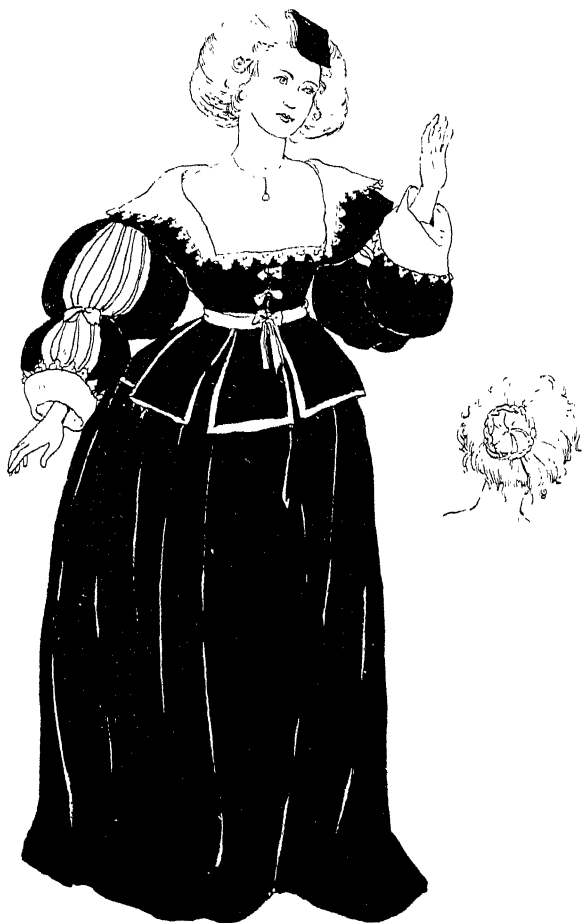
was at a period when France had abandoned any form of head-dress, and all the attention that had previously been lavished upon hats and caps was now concentrated on curling and arranging the hair becomingly round the face. Should my lady wish to pro-



DUTCH (1627)

Fig. 6

tect her head from the inclement weather, a scarf or hood was deemed less likely to disturb her carefully arranged coiffure than a hat. And if perchance the sun was too likely to freckle or sunburn or dazzle the eyes, a little mask



FRENCH (1626)

Fig. 7

was carried to afford the face the necessary protection. The fear of the effects of sun on the skin was so great during the period 1630-1650 that veils laid over the hair and reaching to the shoulders were frequently worn in the summer.





## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS

French fashions in hairdressing continued to take the lead until the close of the century, and the styles were both many and varied.

By 1640 the feminine silhouette had again changed,



ITALIAN (1623)

Fig. 8

and French and Dutch fashions competed for an established popularity in other countries.

In France the waist-line dropped to normal, the huge puffed sleeves gave place to a slightly less exaggerated form of the earlier fashion. The deep lace collar was



GERMAN (1625)

Fig. 9



SPANISH (1640)

Fig. 10





DUTCH (1645)

Fig. 11

brought to the front of the bodice and formed a V-neck. The overskirt was bunched and folded back. It was often tied with ribbons, and revealed a long laced apron probably worn over a flowered petticoat.

The Dutch fashions were considerably less decorative. Lace was not so popular, and deep linen collars from

the throat to well over the shoulders covered a tight-fitting, short-waisted bodice. Sleeves were usually worn fitting the arm and terminating in a deep linen cuff. The style for folding back the overskirt, however, was generally popular, but plain materials decorated with bands of some contrasting colours were more general in Holland than the daintily flowered fabrics of France.

A tightly laced corset had once more become a necessity for the fashionable Frenchwoman. The waist-line and corset of the seventeenth century were perpetually changing.

The long-boned stomachers of the early seventeenth century and the short, high-waisted gowns which required no corset have already been mentioned, but each of these styles was accompanied by an entirely different type of skirt. From 1650 to 1700 the skirts remained fundamentally the same, but the corset varied considerably with each new decade. A full, gathered skirt was worn over a contrasting petticoat, the overskirt being split up the front and folded back, or bunched up in a variety of styles which followed not so much the dictates of fashion as the whims and inclinations of the owners. The width and length of these gowns varied slightly with the years. At times they barely touched the ground, and a few years later they swept in a pointed train behind. These styles, however, were mere local idiosyncrasies: for utilitarian purposes the shorter skirt was always a favourite—and for more formal occasions the train gave a stately and regal appearance.

It was during the 'forties that Frenchwomen once more began to tight-lace themselves, and by 1650 a small waist was an absolute necessity to the well-dressed lady.

The bodices of their gowns were cut to finish at the normal waist-line at the back, but extended to a slightly curved or pointed U shape in front. The line from armpit to waist definitely curved inward and was not straight as all the earlier corsets had been.

Gradually the length of the V in the front was exaggerated and stiffened until the 'sixties, when a very peculiar silhouette was the ultimate result. This quaint stiffness



SPANISH (1659)

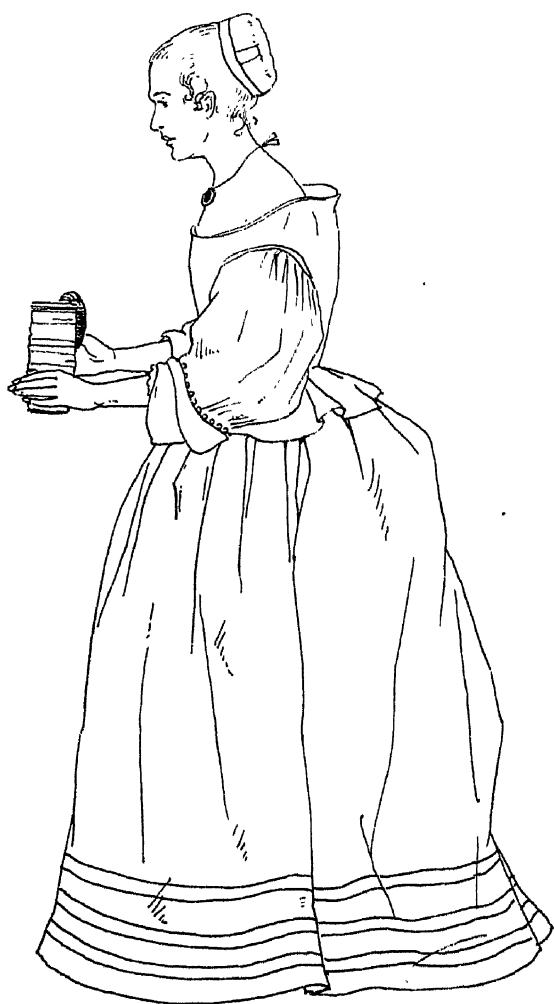
Fig. 12



FRENCH

SPANISH  
(1660)  
Fig. 13

DUTCH



DUTCH (1660)

Fig. 14



DUTCH (1665)

Fig. 15

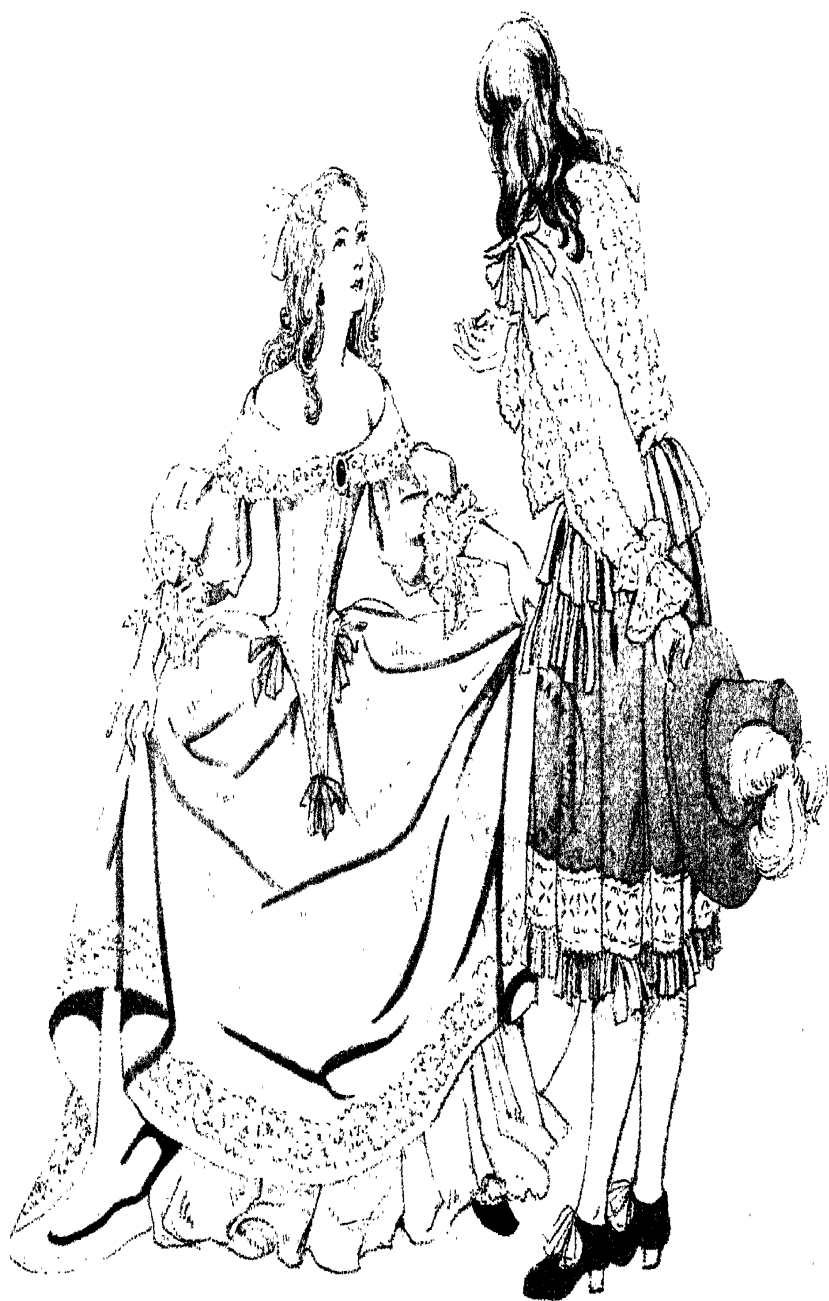
was accentuated by the deep lace collars which were worn tightly fitting over the shoulder, often reaching nearly to the elbow. These collars were either high to the throat or worn right off the shoulder—a new style in daring revelation. Sleeves remained full and fluffy until the



DUTCH (1666)

Fig. 16

'seventies, when a cuff or gathered edge replaced the 'puff' so popular in previous years. The tight, stiff, long, pointed bodice with its sharp little curve over the hips was succeeded in the 'seventies by an even more wooden affair which encased the body from armpit to just below the waist in an unrelenting cylinder forcing the breasts upward, so that a too revealing curve had to be decorously covered with a soft swathing of lace or net. These stiff and









DUTCH (1675)

Fig. 17

uncomfortable stays were replaced during the closing years of the century by corsets giving the effect of armour. The fashions for pseudo-classical dress had made a loose-sleeved low-necked shift the popular attire for the lady in the privacy of her home, and these embroidered corsets

worn over the shift served to give a severe finish to a gown which might otherwise appear too much like a *négligée*. Gems of all kinds were stitched on to the gowns of the wealthy, and a curious stiffness resulted. Heavy gold and silver fringes and scroll-work embroideries helped to foster this fashion.

The stiff, high corset was worn for more formal occasions well into the eighteenth century, but the classical style for draperies had done much to introduce freedom into domestic wear.

During the 'forties the deflated effect disappeared from men's clothes, and after a few years' experimental adjustment of knee-breeches with an assortment of coats of varying lengths, an entirely new fashion made its appearance. This consisted of a short coat or jacket barely reaching to the waist, and full loose breeches of knee-length



FRENCH (1685)

Fig. 18



FRENCH (1685)

Fig. 19



PORTUGUESE (1688)

Fig. 20



DUTCH (1660 AND 1665)

Fig. 21

similar to very full 'shorts.' The extreme brevity of these garments was made up for by the superabundance of decoration which they received. An absolute mania for ribbon and lace developed during the late 'forties and continued to be an outstanding item of decoration for masculine garments until the end of the century. Hundreds of yards of ribbon must have gone to the making of some of these suits, and the more ornate and absurdly over-burdened



DUTCH (1666)

Fig. 22

with ornaments they became, the more popular was this fashion.

Loops of ribbon were arranged all round the waist of the breeches—often all round the hems. Bunches were sewn nonchalantly down the sides, or arranged in tiers from hips to knee—or even, in more excessive cases, sewn on to flaps that hung from the waist to just below the hem of the breeches. Bows appeared on the shoulders, at the elbows, on garters, sword-belt, hats, in the hair, and on the toes of shoes. In fact, there was no limit to the places where ribbons might be grouped.

This fashion, absurd though it was, spread quickly to other countries, and it is from Holland that we find records of the most exaggerated styles worn during the 'fifties and 'sixties.

The man of the seventeenth century was undeniably the wearer of fine feathers, and the 'mere female' far less over-dressed and excessively decorated. Ribbons, lace, feathers, and curly coiffures—usually feminine prerogatives—all became for a short time more important to the man



FRENCH (1660)

Fig. 23

than the actual cut of his clothes, for indeed with these lavishly over-ornamented garments little if anything could be seen of the shape beneath. Any mistake that the tailor made could be easily covered up by an aptly placed bunch of ribbon or frill of lace.

With the approach of the 'sixties, even the absurdly full and festooned petticoat breeches failed to please the passion for decoration of their French wearers, and a new garment was evolved with a full, gathered leg below the knee, finished with a deep frill of lace or ribbon loops, and over this a skirt full and decorated that reached almost to the knee. What little leg remained visible beneath these garments was usually

adorned by the drooping boot-hose or stocking-tops laced and embroidered and falling almost over the beribboned shoe itself. (Fig. 23.)

A new long-coat just made its appearance during the late 'sixties, and probably because of its violent contrast



to former styles, it quickly became universally popular. At first it was a long, loose coat, with short sleeves, split twelve inches or so up the back, and often decorated with buttons. This was worn over the still full and over-decorated breeches. By about 1670 the coat was waisted and could be worn buttoned right down the front. Bunches of ribbon decorated the shoulders, and turned-back cuffs the sleeves. These cuffs might begin at the elbow or several inches down the forearm. Breeches remained full and frilled. At the close of the 'seventies more decoration was attained by the addition of a contrasting long waistcoat—the coat left undone to show off this new garment to its full advantage. Lace and silk-embroidered sashes were quite often tied round the waist over the coat. The pockets, cuffs, and sleeves were usually decorated, and the skirts of the coat, now considerably fuller, were split up the sides as well as the back to permit the wearing of a sword and to supply yet another excuse for border decoration.

Soon after 1680 the full breeches vanished and were replaced by fairly tight-fitting knee-breeches worn under the stocking. The latter were now gartered above the knee and the attention was entirely devoted to the decoration of the coat and waistcoat. The split sides were quite often pleated and finished with a button. Cuffs continued to grow in size till the end of the century, when they became large, flapping, and ungainly pieces of material from elbow to wrist. Waistcoats were sometimes sleeved with long, tight sleeves showing several inches below the cuff and sometimes loose and terminating only a few inches below—just long enough to show a contrasting band of material.

Bunches of ribbon were still very popular in the closing



FRENCH (1665)

Fig. 24



DUTCH (1680)

Fig. 25



DUTCH (1680)

Fig. 26



ITALIAN (1683)

Fig. 27



DANISH (1688)

Fig. 28



GERMAN (1683)

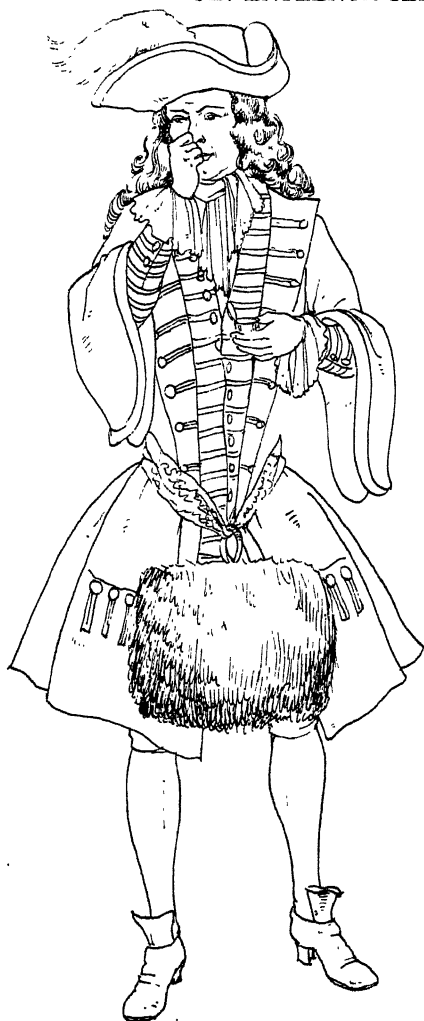
Fig. 29

years of the century, being worn on the shoulders, cuffs, and sword-belt.

A fashion for gigantic muffs fastened to the sash by a large ring was vastly indulged by the gallants of the time.

With their feathered hats, huge wigs, muffs, full-skirted

## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS



FRENCH (1694)

Fig. 30

coats, cloaks, and high-heeled shoes, they must have been every bit as over-dressed and effeminate as their predecessors of the 'sixties; although the whole style had undergone a change, nothing indeed remained of the earlier styles and fashions, except the wig, which had been exaggerated out of all recognition.

The early wigs had come into fashion first in France, when Louis XIV began to lose his hair, and the fashion demanded that every man must display a fine head of hair. He quickly overcame his natural deficiency in the particular and ordered periwigs of real hair of sumptuous thickness and curls to make up, probably, for several previous years when his

own had failed to please. Once wig-makers had discovered the marvels they could create and the substantial fortunes they could accumulate, nothing stopped their



fantastic adventures, until the wigs became unwieldy and unmanageable and hats an absurdity.

Hairdressing has always been very much influenced by the shapes and styles of dresses worn at a particular period. One can see this during the seventeenth century when each country followed its own styles of dress. For instance, in France, during the early years of the century, when bombast and farthingales were worn, women's hair was piled and puffed on top of the head and held out with frames, or else a wig was worn, the general effect being puffed and unnatural. When the French gowns of the 'twenties became soft and fell once more in folds, the hair was dressed with equal softness and hung pleasantly and unpretentiously to the lobe of the ear or even to the shoulders. Later, during the 'forties and 'fifties, as the dresses began to assume a double skirt or panniered effect, the hair was more obviously parted in the middle and draped half up and half down, usually with long curls in the front and a plait or roll behind. During the 'seventies, when the overskirt had frankly taken on a bustle effect behind, the hair was dressed in a 'boss,' or cluster of curls at the back (Fig. 32). As the sides of the dress became fuller and more bunched up, the hair was puffed at the sides with curls drawn from behind resting on the shoulders (Fig. 32). With the fashion of the 'eighties and 'nineties—a stiffened skirt and softly draped panniers—hairdressing became an interesting and amusing combination of stiffness and informality



FRENCH (1629)

Fig. 31





## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS



(1670)



(1680)



(1690)



(1693)

Fig. 32

with its carefully arranged curls, each with a name and place, and the absurdly ornate pinner head-dresses, decorated with frontally arranged ribbons and gems in much the same way as the gowns themselves.

Spain, in contrast, clung to her stiffly padded skirts and farthingales and retained the old, high-piled, puffed,

and padded hairdressing of the late sixteenth century well into the 'forties. When the extremely full hooped skirts of the 'fifties superseded the less exaggerated fashion, the hair became a miniature replica of the absurd skirts themselves, and was curled and puffed, plaited and tied with



SPANISH (1629)



SWEDISH (1629)

Fig. 33

bows until it stood away from the head to a ridiculously unnatural shape (Fig. 34).

Dutch and German styles followed two modes—both that of France and their own adaptation of the older fashion. Thus throughout the century we find a certain percentage of women wearing the scraped-back hair and tight-fitting bonnets and caps, and those of more frivolous inclinations following the more 'undressed' fashions of the French Court.

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS



SPANISH (1652)

Fig. 34

Men's modes of hairdressing also followed the silhouette to a great extent.

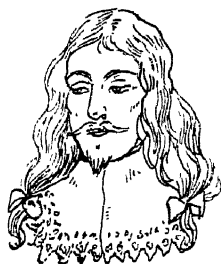
Where the ruffle was worn, the hair had of necessity to be worn short, but with the wide, wing-like collars of the 'twenties and 'thirties the hair underwent a variety of extraordinary changes. The loose, slightly bedraggled

effect of the deflated garments with their trimmings of ribbon and still puffy sleeves were almost exactly imitated by the hairdressing of the French fops and gallants of the time. The hair was frizzed and puffed around the face and trailed off into what were then called 'love-locks'—strands, or curls of hair, tied at the extreme ends with bows of ribbon and arranged to fall nonchalantly over the shoulders. In the extremest addicts to the follies of fashion the head rather resembled the matted untidiness of the head of a child's doll that has lain unattended for many years. However, as the high-waisted doublets assumed more normal proportions, and the floppy breeches were replaced by a more closely fitting leg-covering, the hair also assumed a more normal aspect and was worn brushed into fairly neat curls usually reaching just over the shoulders to rest on the beautifully worked lace-collars that had superseded the high curved ones of the 'twenties and 'thirties. Later, as the fashions once more became exaggerated, full-skirted, and absurdly over-ornamented, the periwig was the fashionable imitation of the frilled and flounced silhouette. With its masses of curls often reaching half-way down the back there is an undeniable resemblance to the many-tiered coat and petticoat-breeches and boot-hose that were the accepted form of dress during the 'sixties, and any form of hairdressing of smaller proportions would no doubt have rendered the head ridiculously small in contrast to the over-ornamented body beneath.

As coats changed into the long full-skirted shape that was to be so popular for a century or more, the periwigs assumed even larger and more incongruous proportions and were eventually divided into three separate masses of curls—as indeed the skirts of the coat were divided to give



A



B



C



D

A (1625)

B (1645)

C (1665)

D (1685)

Fig. 35



greater freedom and more accessibility to the sword and pockets beneath.

Masculine footwear worn in the seventeenth century was both amusing and various. Here again, French fashions favoured the exaggerated styles that were not adopted by the more sober-minded countries.

During the first twenty years of the century the shoe was usually low-cut at the sides, with a square toe and a heel an inch or two in height, the instep being adorned by a large bow or rosette or even a bunch of lace decorated with beads and gems. The curious fashion for bucket-top boots came into being during the 'twenties and remained a favourite absurdity for some twenty years. Not content with the width at the top of these boots, huge butterfly tabs adorned the instep and held the spurs in place. Boot-hose were worn inside. These were long stockings with the tops made about the same width as the tops of the boots. Embroidered and decorated, they hung down over the turned-back boot-tops. Another form of decoration was the 'stocking-tops,' or merely embroidered pieces to give the appearance of the boot-hose without fulfilling the latter's dual purpose of saving friction on the hose beneath as well as being ornamental.

In France these boots assumed absurd proportions—so ungainly they became, indeed, that it was with the greatest difficulty that the 'gallants' or cavaliers could successfully straddle along.

Except for riding, the boot vanished during the 'sixties, and shoes once more became the vogue. This time, however, the toe was considerably elongated, being to all appearances at least an inch or so longer than the foot. The toe was square and flattened and reached up to an elongated tongue or flap several inches above the ankle.



A

(1630)



B

(1640)



C

(1655)



D

(1670)

Fig. 36

These flaps were invariably decorated with a buckle, which, in its turn, was decorated with gems or paste. The tongue or flap could be cut in a variety of shapes, and, more often than not, it was lined with a contrasting material or leather. Heels were high, absurdly so in some cases, and quite frequently square in shape. Often when the tongue was lined, the heel also was of a contrasting colour, usually scarlet.

Women's shoes were fragile and inconsequent affairs of embroidered silk, satin, or velvet. Their durability and utility were practically negligible.

The materials employed in the making of garments were numerous. In the early years of the seventeenth century velvets and plush, satins and silks of a stiff nature were mostly used; the fashion for damasks and heavy materials richly embroidered or interwoven with gold and silver thread only lasted in France until about 1615. But in Spain and Italy these richly decorated and stiffened fabrics were used considerably until the middle of the century.

About 1620 the new softness of style in French gowns and skirts required a much softer and more flimsy material to carry out the deflated idea which was so fashionable after the abandonment of the bombast and farthingale. Spotted and flowered lawn figured largely in the wardrobe of the fashionable lady, while soft pastel-coloured silks and linens were frequently used for men's suits.

A few years later taffetas became universally popular, and a softer type of velvet than had previously been used was often employed in men's garments. Woven silk hose were quite a common extravagance for the first fifteen or twenty years of the century. This was richly em-



DUTCH (1690)

Fig. 37

broidered with a variety of coloured silks. Later, when the boot-hose and stocking-tops were the fashionable extravagance, these beautifully embroidered pieces of linen supplanted the more colourful leg-wear of earlier years.

It is impossible to think of the seventeenth century without immediately visualizing lace and ribbons, and from about 1640 to 1670 it was quite possible to make an entire gown or suit with these two flimsy substances and the assistance of a silk lining.

The Dutch fashions were considerably heavier in effect than the frothy effervescence of the French frills and furbelows, and dyed linen, holland, and fustian, or woollen cloth, were more often used in the making of clothes than silks, taffetas, and laces. By reason of the fullness of the fashions it was impossible to employ heavy materials, as their weights and bulk would destroy the graceful effect of soft folds which were so typical of the mid-seventeenth century.

The full petticoat-breeches worn by the men relied again for their effect on the brief, vertical folds from waist to knee, and fullness was attained not by a stiffly hanging material, which would have stood out too widely from the waist, but by the lavish ornamentation at the edges of a tightly gathered fine or medium weight fabric. It was not until the 'seventies that heavier woven and thickly embroidered stuffs were once more employed.

As long as tailoring was not a real requisite for fashionable dressing, soft, unstiffened materials were of more importance for their decorative quality of drapery. Directly the long coat with fitted shoulders and waisted back appeared in the late 'sixties the demand for substance and 'dressing' was immediately required in fabrics.



VENETIAN (1690)

Fig. 38

Brocades and richly embroidered silks and velvets were employed mostly for formal wear. Woollens and fustians replaced the linens of a few years earlier.

Calico was still something of a novelty and, because of the difficulties of importation, it became extremely desirable. Block-printed motifs and hand-painted flowers were both used extensively as a method of decoration. Curiously enough, as the men's fashions in fabrics gradually stiffened and became more solid, women also adopted the less fragile materials, and instead of employing limp lace and the softest of embroideries or ribbons, they concentrated their energies on making gold and silver lace, stiff and solid in texture, and decorated their gowns with heavy fringe and tassels, gems and precious stones adding richness to the new formality.

Petticoats, quilted from hem to knee, helped to support the fuller skirts of the 'eighties. Oriental silks of rich thick texture 'crackled' and 'swished' over the hooped supports of the 'nineties. Flanders lace and point lace were both lavishly used on underwear and *négligée*.

Though floral designs were still fashionable until the 'nineties, stripes and flowers embroidered between stripes were more successful in the scheme of stiffness, embroideries were often copied from designs more suited to metal-work than fabrics, and scrolls, loops, and other shapes adapted from classical architecture decorated the petticoat and corsage of the elegant Frenchwoman of the late 'nineties.







## THE THEATRE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE production of an opera in eighteenth-century Italy necessitated almost as much lavish expenditure and probably almost as much work as that of a super-Hollywood film of to-day. The scenic effects were positively breath-taking in their splendour and size, and experiments in lighting and transformation scenes involved endless constructional work, made more difficult by the rather clumsy and inadequate machinery of the time.

Contemporary writers were rich in their praise of the clever illusions that were carried out without hitches. Coloured lights were obtained by the use of gigantic bottles of coloured fluids, similar to the bottles that used to adorn the windows of every chemist's shop. The cleverest artists of the time devoted themselves to the intricacies of furthering the architectural and scenic effects and illusions, and drawings of these vast opera-houses give one an impression of space and splendour certainly never achieved in the English theatre of the twentieth century.

While so much thought and energy were put into the actual stage and background for the players, the players themselves were completely dwarfed by their surroundings. The theatre indeed appeared to be of far greater interest as a spectacle in itself than as a setting for the tiny figures who danced and sang behind the footlights. It was in all probability due to this splendid scenery that practically no collected sets of costumes existed. Only the leading artists were furnished with 'suitable' apparel for their parts and this was often as over-decorated and rococo as

the surroundings. The smaller parts and choruses were played in almost any property clothes in much the same way that a collection of children to-day, in playing charades or theatricals, will don any disguise rather than appear as they are.

The magnificence of the Italian opera-houses had reached a height never previously dreamed of in the wildest flights of theatrical fancy. And no other European country could attempt to come near them in their glistening splendour. But it remains a curious fact that, from the point of view of historical accuracy, the costumes were merely bizarre and ridiculous for at least the first half of the eighteenth century.

Although practically all dramatic authors of this time specialized in historic and oriental themes, the idea of costume was definitely not considered. In fact, any departure from the approved though utterly unauthentic style of dressing all the male actors in pseudo-Roman armour of peculiar design, and encouraging the actresses to wear the most exaggerated and fantastic versions of the latest fashions, met with immediate disapproval.

It was in France that a reform of costume eventually took place.

In 1753 Mme Favart appeared on the stage as a villager. Her hair was in plaits; she wore a rough serge gown; and she had bare arms and legs and her feet were in sabots. This departure from the accepted and almost traditional operatic costume caused a lot of harsh criticism. It was considered a poor style which served to cheapen dramatic art.

Voltaire's *l'Orphelin de la Chine* was played in Chinese costume as early as 1755, and Chaussée's *l'Amour Castillan* was played at about the same time in Spanish costume.



FRENCH (1730)

Fig 39

It was probably very unreal but, none the less, it was an attempt that caused considerable surprise, and was considered a daring departure which met with little approval.

The heroine in Voltaire's *Mérope* appeared in a brocade gown with panniers. Her hair was powdered, and she had patches on her face, and this appearance was not considered either humorous or out of place.

In fact a contemporary theatrical authority writes in 1755 that "historical exactitude is impossible and fatal to dramatic art." So a sort of half-reform was arrived at which still gave the player considerable scope for his or her fancy in dress. It is an amusing fact that when *Brutus* was played in 1768, the actors were in a Greek temple and the soldiers dressed in Mexican style with guns and bayonets.

Many arrangements of costume that were equally silly and out of place occurred from time to time throughout the century.

Ballet costume appeared in a more or less accepted style of its own in about 1720, the ladies of the ballet wearing huge hooped skirts festooned with garlands of roses and bows of ribbon. The shoes had a small heel, and the skirts were about ten or twelve inches from the ground. The male ballet performers were still satisfied with the pseudo-classic taste for armour resulting in a sort of abbreviated ballet skirt, and with a gigantic feathered helmet on the head. During the 'thirties the pastoral influence suggested the possibilities of a full-skirted coat and knee-breeches, and this comparatively simple conversion of everyday wear became almost as popular as the earlier styles.

Although Italian opera had reached such a very high standard of scenic perfection during the last years of the seventeenth century, and the early years of the eighteenth,

the Parisian theatre was still something of a novelty, and Paris only boasted three proper theatres: L'Académie Royal, the Comédie Française, and a room in the Hôtel de Bourgogne where first Molière and later the Italian comedians played.

Lully had tried to start an open-air theatre near the Luxembourg gardens. It was not, however, a successful enterprise, although apparently it had been lavishly fitted out with the latest mechanical devices, as well as an orchestra and ballet.

Lully and Molière had done much to perfect and improve theatrical conditions, and after their deaths the French theatre seems to have floundered somewhat on the rocks of the absurd convention which demanded splendour without taste or intelligence.

It was probably due to Beaumarchais' efforts in the second half of the century that both scenery and costumes were given a little more thought, and a certain connexion with the themes of the productions. Beaumarchais was addicted to exact scenery, and he obviously did not feel that a magnificent Gothic setting or a Greek temple was an appropriate background to his *Barber of Seville*.

Although there were so few real theatres in Paris during the early years of the century, there were numerous small private theatres. Indeed, practically all the wealthy aristocracy had converted rooms in their mansions specially for the production of theatrical enterprises.

The whole of France had become what we should probably term 'theatre-conscious' by about the middle of the century. Under the auspicious encouragement of Marie Antoinette the theatre became a popular diversion.

Spain, which, during the seventeenth century, had produced such a wealth of exciting, romantic, and adventure-



FRENCH (1770)

Fig. 40

some themes for drama, had now fallen behind or was, at the best, a source from which French or Italian writers could draw their plots. Italy was still absorbed in her magnificent and spectacular experiments in stage-effects, and dramatic authors sprang up like mushrooms to furnish her wonderful theatres with adequately inspiring operas and plays. Either poetic genius seemed to be easier to foster than dramatic prose, or else it met with more encouragement. So we find that the majority of Italian playwrights of the eighteenth century limited their adventures to the production of opera—or operetta.

One of the earliest of these poetic geniuses of the eighteenth century was Pietro Metastasio, an Italian born in Rome in 1698. Although brought up to study law, he discovered that lyrical poetry ran insistently through his mind, and interfered considerably with his scholastic efforts. He eventually wrote an operetta, *Gli Orti Esperidi*, admirably set to music of his own composition, but still imagining that this was a waste of time, he allowed it to be produced only on the understanding that he should remain anonymous.

It was acted in Naples with splendid decorations and was an immediate and outstanding success. Its authorship was eventually discovered by the prima donna Marianna Bulgarini, who had played Venus, the lead in this production. Her unexpected patronage and admiration caused him to abandon his law-training and devote himself entirely to dramatic writing and music. So spontaneous was this artist that he admitted to never writing lyrical poetry without imagining the musical accompaniments. In 1724 he wrote *Didone abbandonata* and *Siroe*. His drama of *Cato* was acted in 1727, and he was elected Court Poet of Vienna in 1730. After that date he wrote only a few



theatrical works, including *Alessandro nell' Indie* and *Artaserse*.

Although Metastasio was admittedly an inspired composer of light operatic work during the early years of the eighteenth century, it is to Goldoni that the honours must be paid as a reformer of Italian comedy. Goldoni, born in 1707, discovered at an early age his theatrical inclinations, and, after joining a troupe of Italian comedians, he decided that their inconsequent improvisation and forced situations could be considerably improved by the introduction of a plot founded on natural incidents and definite parts learnt by heart. To this end he devoted himself, and with so great a success that an entirely new type of comic theatre was established in Italy, and the old order of actors who preferred not to memorize their parts, but to exaggerate and buffoon, unhampered by these new restrictions, were forced to limit their activities generally to the provinces of their own and other countries where strolling players were still welcomed. Goldoni, like so many of his predecessors, looked for his early inspirations among the old dramas of *Griselda* and *Don Giovanni*. Afterwards he followed the example of Molière; *Donna di Garbo* and *The Daughter of the Lacemaker* were both written from truly contemporary life, and he found in the Venetian modes and manners of the mid-eighteenth century an inexhaustible supply of themes which his ready wit and dramatic talents turned into a brilliant record of his time. He was extraordinarily prolific in his writings, and, at one time he succeeded in completing sixteen comedies between seasons. Of these, *The Pernicious Ladies*, *La Pamela*, *The Prudent Lady*, and *The Gossipings* were the most popular. Goldoni, encouraged by his success in Italy, went to Paris in 1761, in an effort to reform the Italian comedians

still so popular in France. However, they did not welcome the prospect of having to learn their parts, and Goldoni's enterprise was not immediately successful. Nevertheless, he did produce one brilliant comedy in Paris, *Le Bourru Bienfaisant*, which Voltaire praises as the most brilliant French farce since Molière.

Alfieri (1749-1803) was another Italian playwright of undoubted talent, but with a horror of being influenced by the works of other dramatists. He refused to read any of the works of his predecessors for fear of imitating their style or copying their plots. Most of his dramatic works are founded on the lives of Biblical or historical figures. *Mirra* is considered his most successful tragedy out of fourteen which include: *Maria Stuarda*, *Rosmunda*, *Octavia*, *Filippo*, *Antigone*, *Polinice*, *Virginia*, *Bruto*, and *Agide*. All these tragedies were written and produced before the end of the 'eighties, and none of them was founded on contemporary eighteenth-century life. A highly strung and easily depressed temperament resulted in Alfieri's complete breakdown when confronted with the arduous and rather soul-shattering job of correcting proofs of his works for publication, and during the last twenty years of his life he produced nothing.

Monti, who has since been acknowledged as the greatest Italian poet since the golden days of poetry, was born in 1754 and died in 1826. His *Aristodemo* was first acted in Rome in 1787 and was successfully accompanied by the usual eighteenth-century embellishments. He specialized in bloodthirsty and highly imaginative rhapsodies, undoubtedly influenced by the old Spanish writers. The last outstanding efforts in Italian eighteenth-century drama were those of Ugo Foscolo. In 1797, at the early age of nineteen, he produced a drama *Thyestes*, written with some

skill but rather over-influenced by the works of Alfieri. His only other theatrical work was *Ajax*, produced in 1813, which was singularly heavy and not particularly successful.

Italian opera was considered the most exquisite of all dramatic entertainments and was encouraged and welcomed throughout Europe.

In France a variety of playwrights made their appearance during the century. Regnard was still a popular writer of light comedy when the century opened. His *Les Folies amoureuses* and *Le Légataire universel* were both produced before 1708. Le Sage (1668-1747) specialized in light comedies and Spanish romances. *Crispin rival de son maître* (1707), *Turcaret* (1709), and *l'Histoire de Gil Blas* (1715) were all successful productions founded on contemporary French manners and customs.

Voltaire was one of the most successful French dramatic writers of the eighteenth century. His works are full of the spirited vivacity of the old Spanish writers, and his historical and classic romances gave the splendour-loving public all that they could possibly demand in the way of colourful drama and heart-rending tragedy. His first work was the tragedy of *Œdipe*, produced in 1718. He found time between the writings of his various histories to produce several outstandingly successful tragedies, including *Brutus* (1730), *Zaïre* (1732), *La Mort de César* (1735), *Algire* (1736), *Mahomet* (1741), *Mérope* (1743), *l'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755), and *Tancrède* (1760).

Beaumarchais distinguished himself in 1775 by writing *Le Barbier de Séville* and *Le Mariage de Figaro* in 1784, both brilliant and sparkling comedies which have earned him a theatrical reputation of merit. He also wrote three dramas which were not anything like as successful—*Eugénie* (1767), *Les Deux Amis* (1770), and *La Mère coupable* (1791).

There were numerous French writers of the eighteenth century who attempted to write satirical comedies in the Molière tradition—light or frivolous commentaries on the modes and manners of an age of insincerity and intrigue. Among these Legrand, Marivaux, Favart, Destouches, Dancourt, Anseaume, and Florian have all left us several works which are typical of their time.

Light comedies were encouraged in France probably as an antidote to heavy melodrama, and many of these pieces were adapted for the Italian stage, as indeed the farcical Italian comedies were translated for the French theatre.

For nearly a century France and Italy had supplied the Continent with all the dramatic efforts of merit, when at long last Germany produced, in Lessing, a dramatic author filled with a zest to improve the insipid productions that were then characteristic of Germany. Curiously enough, Germany boasted several extremely good actors at this period, and as Lessing aptly expresses it: "We have actors but no dramatic art—if, in times gone by, such an art existed, we no longer possess it, it is lost and has to be invented anew." And he set himself the task of inventing it anew. It was Lessing undoubtedly who put in all the spade-work of breaking down the vogue for old, adapted, and poorly produced French plays, and pointed to Shakespeare as the real leader of the cultivated theatre.

In 1767 he successfully produced a true comedy of 'refined class' called *Minna von Barnhelm* which was an immediate success in Germany and established his earlier works as something in the nature of German classics. *Emilia Galotti* (1772) and *Nathan der Weise* (1779) were both welcomed with great applause.

Schiller established himself as yet another dramatic author of considerable merit with *The Robbers*, produced in 1782. His themes were rather grotesque, and certainly not refined, but they undoubtedly met with the appreciation of his audiences. It is interesting to find that here in Germany the 'costume' period had not yet arrived. When *The Robbers* was produced, Dalberg, the producer, decided that modern costumes might appear absurd in the fantastic setting of the play—and the playbills stated that the piece was supposed to have taken place in "the year when Emperor Maximilian established perpetual peace in Germany"—probably about the last year or so of the fifteenth century. The men appeared in tights and jerkins and the ladies in panniered skirts and high powdered wigs. The whole effect must have been extremely funny, as the language of the production was certainly not that of the late Middle Ages.

Schiller's *Fiesco* and *Kabale und Liebe* were nothing like as popular as *The Robbers*. He also wrote *Don Carlos* and *Die Verschwörung* during the 'eighties, when he was appointed author to the National Theatre at Mannheim.

Goethe had already contributed *Clavigo* and *Stella* to the rapidly mounting collection of German dramatic works, before the 'eighties, and a general and warm interest in the theatre had replaced the half-hearted toleration with which it had previously been received.

Iffland was another great writer of this period, and his ideas ran to the painting of human life without character. His *Crime and Ambition* and *The Marksman* were his two best and most outstanding dramatic works.

The most prolific German dramatic writer of the century was A. von Kotzebue, who seems to have positively steeped Germany in the multitudinous efforts that he

poured forth between 1790 and 1800. *Armuth und Edelsinn* was produced nearly every year from 1795 to 1822. Though to the modern mind his plays seem tedious and long-winded, they were undoubtedly popular in their own time and were frequently translated into other languages and produced in other countries within a few months of their original production in Germany.

It is due to Iffland to say that with him died the dramatic art of eighteenth-century Germany.

## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DRESS

A HIGH, frilled head-dress called a 'pinner' had come into fashion in the late 'eighties of the preceding century.

The 'pinner' was a starched and sometimes, in more exaggerated interpretations, wired lace frill, fan-shaped and pleated. It was arranged on the front of the head in an upstanding crest. The frill might be single or double. In the latter case a row of looped ribbons stood up at equal intervals between the two frills; a cluster of ribbons, usually formally arranged, were placed at the back of the pinner. The whole arrangement of frills or ribbons was often sewn on to a little flat bonnet worn on the back of the head, and in this case it was called a 'commode.' Various additions, such as a hanging veil behind, or a narrow fringed scarf folded and stitched to the bonnet so that the fringed ends hung either at the back or over the shoulders, were very popular.

The height of the pinner-frill varied from a few inches to as much as eighteen inches in more exaggerated styles, and the difficulty of balancing this erection with dignity



(1700)

Fig. 41

was often lessened by the addition of a triangular, jewelled clasp fixed to the hair immediately above the forehead, and could be attached to the base of the frill, giving it a reasonably safe mooring.

The excessive height of these head-dresses was an object of great amusement to the satirists of the time, and when a shawl was worn over the head, an









FRENCH (1704)

Fig. 42

absurd silhouette was the result, as can be well imagined. A contemporary writer of the time aptly describes the effect in the couplet :

Whilst head was 'erst on shoulders placed  
Imagine now about the waist.



VENETIAN (1710)

Fig. 43



FRENCH (1717)

Fig. 44

This was undoubtedly a fashion of French inspiration and was much worn in France and England during the 'nineties. Venetian and Spanish ladies had adopted them at the beginning of the eighteenth century and were several years later in discarding them than the Parisienne, who had completely lost interest in the 'com-mode' by 1710.

Almost with the opening year of the century French hair-fashion began to change; the pinner and

its accompanying conglomeration of frills and ribbons, wire and lace was a thing of the past by 1710, and for a few hesitant years long curls vied in popularity with the novel idea of packing the hair away close to the head, and placing an absurd little lace cap on the top. The tendency towards an 'undressed' effect became a feature of the fashionable after 1715—and whether the effect was obtained by a pseudo-classical or pseudo-pastoral gown, informality was the attempted result.

This *négligé* was not confined entirely to women's clothes, for although the full-bottomed wigs and wired skirts to the coats were worn at Court by the fashionable



FRENCH (1720)  
Fig. 45

gentleman, in his house he often preferred to wear his own hair or an embroidered cap over his shaven head. In French prints we may frequently find the neck of the shirt open, and the cravat either threaded through a button-hole or else completely discarded. Waistcoats were rarely fastened with more than two or three buttons out of the dozens that adorned them, and on the whole the effect was of a careless or untidy finish.

Women's formal wear included hoops at the side of the skirt to support the panniers, and by about 1718 the English fashion for a gigantic hooped skirt had arrived in Paris—a fashion to last for at least sixty years. The bodices remained tightly laced down the front but extremely low-cut. A loose all-enveloping gown was worn over the dress for informal occasions, and its popularity soon established it as a fashionable addition to the wardrobe. These gowns were called 'contouches' and were gathered across the shoulders at the back, their fullness extending to envelope the huge hooped skirts beneath. The front was often left open, or tied with one or two bows of ribbon—an altogether charming style which Watteau has recorded for us in several of his delightful pictures of the early eighteenth century.

The sleeves of the formal gown had become tight-fitting from shoulder to elbow to finish in a deep, crumpled cuff which displayed several layers of fine lace worn on the garment beneath. But the more informal garments such as the 'contouche' and short coat often had long-fitting sleeves or full-gathered ones from shoulder to wrist.

Square neck-lines, elbow-sleeves with deep lace frills, hooped skirts, and a tightly laced waist finishing in a V-front remained standard features of the gowns from about 1715 to 1770, although details altered considerably from



FRENCH (1718)

Fig. 46







time to time. The most striking and noticeable alteration in fashion was in the hairdressing.

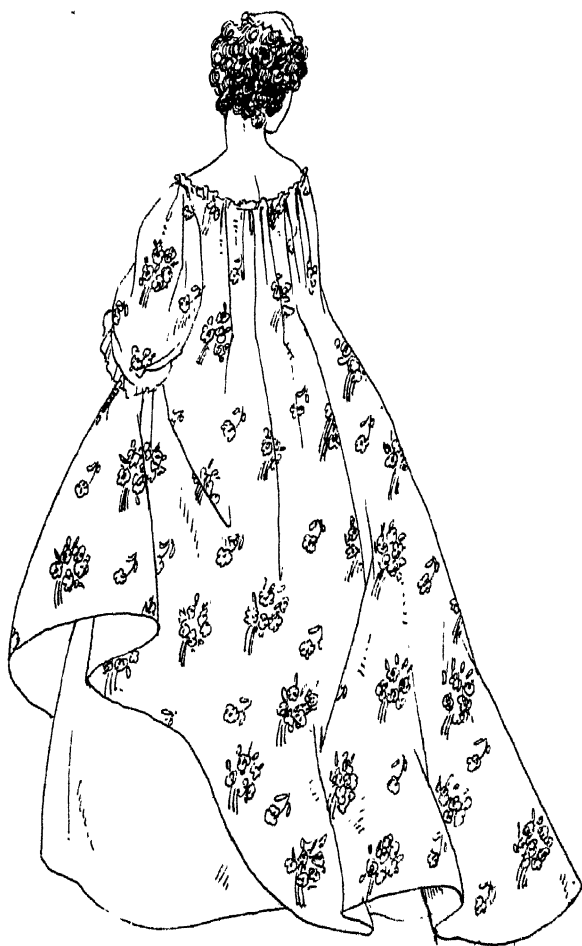
Between 1710 and 1740 these changes were slight but nevertheless noticeable, and it is often from these alterations that, in pictures and prints, a gown otherwise undated can be definitely placed.

By 1715 the hair was generally packed away, inconspicuously, and probably often cut short so that it should make a suitably small head to top the gigantic, hooped skirts. A curious feature of these hooped skirts is that each time the fashion for farthingales, hoops, or crinolines arrived, the style of head-dress assumed a compact and bijou effect in almost ridiculous contrast to the excessive width beneath. During the 'thirties the ends of the hair were often arranged to form small curls which covered the back of the head; the size of the cap was definitely larger, and by the 'forties it had obtained the proportions of a mob-cap. Curls were now generally visible, and, during the 'forties, ringlets were frequently worn, peeping out in clusters beneath the large pseudo-peasant hat, which in its turn was worn over a cap. A temporary and charming informality in hairdressing was fostered by the craze in the French Court for imitating the simplicity of styles worn by shepherds and shepherdesses. It was during the 'fifties that women began to follow the masculine fashion for powdering the hair, and a more definite and formal style of hairdressing inspired the first genius among



(1740)      (1770)

Fig. 47



FRENCH (1730)

Fig. 48



FRENCH (1735)

Fig. 49

barbers to introduce once again a fashion that women could not follow without the assistance of a qualified hairdresser. Little by little the fashion developed into the peculiar absurdities of the late 'seventies and 'eighties. The variety of mere hair-arrangement, supplemented by horse hair, padding, wire frames, false switches, pomatum, and powder, failed to be sufficiently amusing when every one indulged in the same mad experiments. Then absurdly exaggerated wigs added height and width to the fashion, and the variety of arrangements of curls—even from the imperfect records that we still have of the fashions—are bewilderingly numerous. Curls piled in sausage-like rolls, flatly clustered at the back of the wig, and rolled in or out on the neck; long curls and short curls arranged over the shoulders; great hoops held up on top of the piled head or looped low at the back of the neck—all are represented.

Strings of pearls, feathers, and flowers, and little laced and beribboned caps decorated the less extreme hair arrangements. But eventually these styles failed to be sufficiently striking, and every one who had any pretensions to be thought fashionable indulged in the crazy experiments of adding ornament to an already over-decorated head. Ornaments became even more important than the hair or wig, and ladies vied with one another to outdo the possibilities of exaggeration in this direction.

France was not alone in this fashion; for every country entered into the weird and exciting competition. While gigantic ostrich plumes and strings of pearls might be worn by a German princess, a lady with a sense of humour and a fertile imagination appeared in Paris with a roundabout on her head complete with striped awning and flags, and a Spanish galleon in full sail sailed blissfully on a sea of



GERMAN (1767)



FRENCH (1772)

Fig. 50

white curls, perched on the head of an enterprising señorita.

Europe undoubtedly felt the effects of these fresh absurdities, and architects had to take into consideration the fact that a normally tall woman encumbered by a head-dress three feet or more in height must be able to sweep with dignity through doorways and not be compelled to bend a towering head at an inconvenient moment. Not only must the door be high but wide also, as skirts hooped out sideways might quite easily be eight feet wide. By the end of the 'seventies, however, the towering, top-heavy wigs and decoration proved so inconvenient and insanitary that a new style had to be devised. Germany and some of the less enterprising countries still continued to wear the monstrosities of the 'seventies for a further ten years or more, but French ladies, for the few remaining years before the Revolution, wore their hair in a thick and frizzed mass of curls, cut to various lengths and puffed and padded so

as to form a vast curly surround to the face and shoulders. The hair was still dressed high, but its height was now balanced by its width and the tumbling rolls of curls that covered the shoulders. Hats of gigantic proportions and decorated to an absurd degree again became necessary furnishings for the fashionable lady.

As I have previously mentioned, the line of the skirt frequently follows the shape of the hairdressing. The one is certainly influenced by the other, and during the 'eighties and 'nineties of the eighteenth century, this fact is perhaps even more obvious than at any other period. In the early years of the 'eighties skirts remained full but not obviously hooped. The panniered skirts were held out with the assistance of crumpled paper and corded petticoats. There was a definite tendency towards a bustle. The hair also was assisted in its fullness by padding and horse hair, but no longer arranged over a wire frame. Curls did not fall much below the shoulders, and the back of the head was more padded than the top. By about 1784 a train had appeared at the back of the 'bustled' skirt, and the hair at the back was drawn down and curled in a separate roll, which often reached quite a distance down the back. Two years later the skirt ceased to be bunched and padded, except at the back. Fashion demanded an S-shaped figure—and a straight line from the breast downward. Trains were quite the usual thing for a well-dressed Frenchwoman, and the whole silhouette was more formal and less decorated. As far as possible the latest hair-styles followed this line. The hair was puffed and curled over the forehead and formally arranged in curls at the



FRENCH (1790)

Fig. 51







back and sides, with long sweeping S-shaped locks hanging down the back almost to the waist.

Quite suddenly in 1796 the formalities of the previous decade vanished. The bustle and corsets were cast aside, the wigs and fantastically arranged hairdressing disappeared, to be followed by the startlingly undressed and shorn effect of short hair and transparent, high-waisted gowns. The differences between the gowns of 1795 and 1796 are almost as surprising as the differences in hairdressing. It is almost incredible that such a startling contrast should occur in apparently only a few months.

The shadow of the Revolution had been successfully evaded by the casting aside of all that remained as a reminder. Not one detail of women's dress remained the same—even shoes and gloves had altered—the little heels that had been so popular throughout the century were succeeded by flat-soled pumps tied round the ankles with ribbons. The short wrist-length gloves had been entirely superseded by long ones that reached almost to the shoulder, covering the otherwise exposed arm. Huge hats had been replaced by diminutive and child-like bonnets.

Where the tight-corseted waist-line had been there was now merely a gay ribbon tied beneath the breasts. The full skirts with a bunch behind were an absurdity of the past, and ladies vied with one another in wearing the most daringly revealing skirts of diaphanous materials that blew caressingly around their uncovered legs. By 1799 the gown had become so skimpy that they were often cut up the side to allow a little more freedom for walking, and chamois-leather tights had to be worn as some sort of unobtrusive covering against the inclemencies of the weather—a covering, indeed, that did not interfere with the clinging line of the skirts which was so necessary to

## WESTERN EUROPEAN COSTUME

a well-dressed Frenchwoman. These extremes, however, did not penetrate to other countries. The general adoption of 'Empire' styles was considerably modified, although the main factors and lines remained the same or similar. The attempted effect of semi-nudity—termed 'classic'—was essentially of Parisian inspiration, and although a pseudo-classic influence was copied by practically every other European country, the extreme *décolleté* line was often covered by a *modestie*, and the clinging skirts rendered less revealing by a petticoat beneath.



FRENCH (1734)

Fig. 52

The shape of the corset of the eighteenth century did not vary to anything like the degree of that of the seventeenth. Within ten years or so of the beginning of the century the very stiff, high stays had been supplanted by a kind which, though still laced tightly to the waist, did not materially interfere with nature's original plans for the feminine form. The gowns were all boned from breast to waist and usually finished by lacing down the front to a slight V. This shape remained unchanged until the 'sixties, when the waist-line gradually dropped to a few inches below the normal and the V-front was slightly more exaggerated. Throughout the 'seventies tight lacing became more and more usual until, once again, in the 'eighties, we find the tiny waist and the breasts forced upward, thus fostering a fashion for a pigeon-breasted effect which was exaggerated by the addition of stiffened fichus and frilled and flowered collars.

One remarkable feature of women's attire, that remained with very few exceptions universally fashionable, was the eighteenth-century sleeve, tight fitting from shoulder to elbow and terminating in an excessive display of layered lace frills or fine, embroidered lawn, gathered and arranged so that the layers fell away from the elbow almost to the wrist. Bows of ribbon and goffered frills were usually worn just above the lace frills, and sometimes, following the masculine fashions of the time, cuffs were worn.

Sleeves became popular soon after the beginning of the century and remained in favour for about ninety years, when they were eventually supplanted by the tight-fitting long sleeve or the extremely short one so typical of Empire fashion.

During the 'twenties and 'thirties, when the *contouche* and loose-fitting over-gowns were so very popular, the



FRENCH (1740)

Fig. 53

sleeve was not always close fitting, but gathered slightly at the shoulder to give plenty of space for the sleeve beneath. These sleeves either terminated in a deep, soft cuff—an informal edition of the masculine fashion—or else were finished with a slightly wider opening, longer over the elbow point than in front. There are a few examples of the sleeve being very full and gathered both at shoulder and below the elbow, forming a loose bag to accommodate the frills beneath. This was probably so that the wearer could comfortably tuck away her layers of lace frills so that they







ITALIAN (1750)

Fig. 54



should not get unduly in the way while she busied herself about domestic duties.

In eighteenth-century paintings there are to be found perhaps about half a dozen styles which are exceptions to the elbow sleeve with frills. One of these is the rather charming frilled sleeve which was worn sometimes during the 'forties and 'fifties. This consisted of numerous layers of tiny frills from shoulder to just below the elbow. A long, tight sleeve was rarely worn, though practically all the coats were made with a close-fitting long sleeve.

Probably, owing to the extreme fullness of the frilled 'cuff,' coats were rarely worn. Cloaks, short capes, and a sacque-backed over-gown were more often to be seen before the 'twenties.

During the 'seventies and early 'eighties a fuller though still short sleeve was almost as popular as the older style. It was decorated with one or two tiny frills and finished at the elbow, with no hanging lace 'cuff.'

Italian ladies were slow to follow the Parisian fashion, and we may find that almost throughout the century their fashions are modified and that they are several years behind in adopting or discarding the new or old styles, as the case might be.

One obvious and fascinating fashion that was essentially Venetian in its inspiration, and only Italian in interpretation, was the adoption of vast Venetian cloaks. Hoods surrounded the face and covered the shoulders, and the tricorne hat was worn over the hood. These three items were as popular for men as for ladies.

The cloaks continued to be worn until the nineteenth century, but the hats and hoods were of necessity abandoned when the wigs became too high and ornate to



VENETIAN (1745)

Fig. 55

accommodate them comfortably. After that date—some time in the 'seventies—vast, concealing black shawls were worn, as extreme secrecy was necessary to a Venetian lady who followed the conventional intrigue which was so much part of the everyday life of the eighteenth century. Masks were fashionable in Spain and Italy as a further disguise when necessary, and fans were an important part of my lady's wardrobe, both as an enhancement for her sparkling eyes and as a shelter from a too penetrating gaze. The use of a fan to a lady was as much of an art as the use of snuff for a gentleman, and from the 'eighties of the seventeenth century until almost the close of the eighteenth these toys were so much a part of fashionable life that they might almost be considered an item of apparel. Many fans and snuff-boxes were works of art, the most famous artists of the times being employed to paint upon these elegant pieces of frippery. Fans were made of both silk and chicken-skin and often had designs on both sides. Snuff-boxes—which had to appear frequently in use—were more often made of enamels and silver and gold filigree-work, though there are many examples of hand-painted ones still to be found.

If we consider for a moment the decoration of skirts—which dated them far more surely than their actual shape—we can see that at the beginning of the century the split front with contrasting panel was more usual than one that was made of the same material all round. Tiny aprons were very much the vogue from about 1730, and from being merely an addition to the skirt, they eventually became the most decorative part of it. During the 'forties and 'fifties, when materials were either embroidered or printed all over, the obvious method of using a plain material for the apron in contrast was not adopted, because



FRENCH (1762)  
Fig. 56



MARIE ANTOINETTE (1770)

Fig. 57

it immediately gave the impression of serving a useful and practical purpose which was not its function. We find, therefore, many examples of checked or striped material or very fine and exquisite silk embroideries on these diaphanous pieces of nonsense. Their purpose was so essentially ornamental that they were more often than not actually sewn on to the skirt at the time that it was made.

As the size of the skirts was so extreme, hand-embroideries on the gowns themselves were unusual, and ladies found that the apron was just a convenient size and shape to embroider with delicacy. Similarly, the embroideries on coats were always on the cuffs and pocket-flaps—small pieces that could be carried around with ease and



GERMAN (1775)

Fig. 58

comfort. The supports of the immense skirts changed in the 'sixties from being a hoop or hoops of whalebone into steel or bamboo ovals worn over each hip. Several curious devices for skirt-supports appeared at this time. There were those that hinged up and down from the hips to facilitate going through small doorways or getting into sedan chairs.

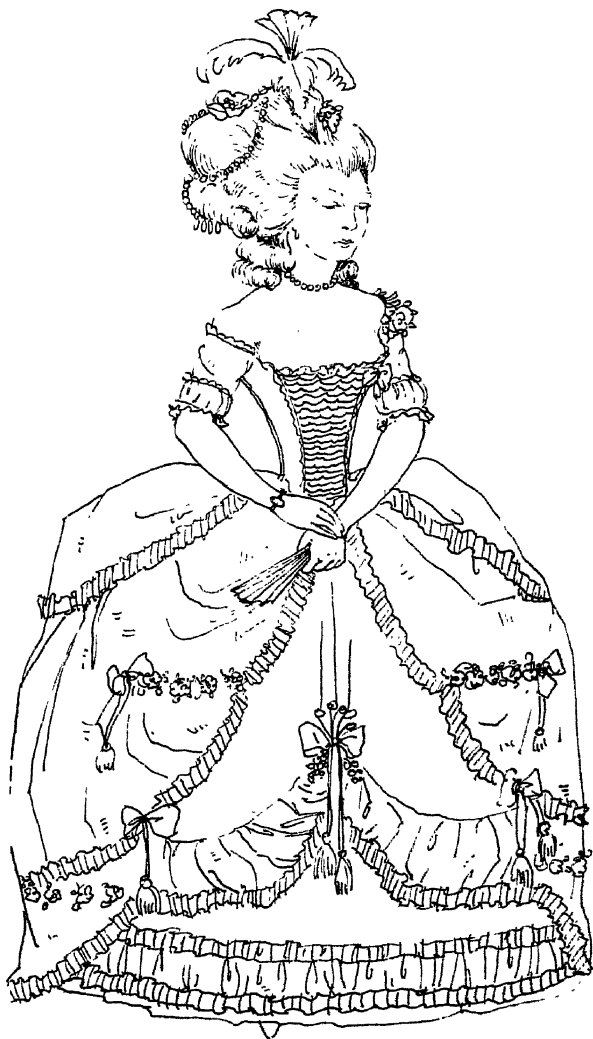
As the shape changed, the decorations altered from all-over patterns to the more fashionable method of adorning the skirt with dozens of yards of gathered and pleated ribbons, tassels, and even feathers. Quite often an overskirt of some fragile and transparent material, such as dotted muslin, was worn over a silk or satin skirt, and gathered up with running cords or ribbons to fall in a series of curved folds to the bottom of the gown. These transparent overskirts first came into vogue several years earlier. As an interesting innovation for ballet-costumes, they were quite frequently worn on ball-gowns as early as the 'fifties, though more popular still during the 'sixties and 'seventies. During the 'seventies floral decoration was not nearly so popular as it had been, and ladies let their fancy have its way with the assistance of ribbon and lace and frills.

It was in the early years of the 'eighties that the most amazing effects were obtained from the use of pleated frills and gathered ribbon, combined with the new idea for looping up an overskirt over a mass of crushed paper or bunched taffeta. As these skirts were often short enough to display the ankle, the effect was a curiously unbalanced one. With huge heads and gigantic bonnets or hats went tiny waists and padded breasts pushed up almost to the chin, and large over-decorated skirts finishing in two tiny ankles and feet. This was fortunately a fashion of short duration, for the re-introduction of trains immediately









GERMAN (1780)

Fig. 59



FRENCH (1780)

Fig. 60

detracted from the interest in skirt-decoration, while ladies racked their well-covered brains for new and enchanting colour-schemes for the bustled and trained gowns of the early 'nineties.

The comparative sobriety that enveloped France for a few years during and after the Revolution was noticeable only in the discarding of unnecessary and too blatant ornamentation. The new figure-shape was still very silly and unpractical, as is shown in fashion-plates of the time. These must always be treated with reserve, however, as indeed must our modern fashion-plates, which would possibly give our great-grandchildren the impression that we were a race of hipless giants with legs of incredible length.

The concept we form when the eighteenth century is mentioned is of elegant, satin-clad gentlemen with white wigs, tricorne hats, knee-breeches, full-skirted coats, and buckled shoes. In reality, there were even more changes in masculine fashions during the eighteenth century than there were in feminine ones. The tricorne hat and the buckled shoes were the only details that were worn throughout the century, and both of these changed their shape considerably during that period.

The century opened with the huge full-bottomed wigs, so popular during the closing years of the preceding century. This popularity lasted for some ten years, when the exaggeratedly stiff styles were eventually abandoned for the far more comfortable craze for informality and a pseudo-peasant or pastoral style. This revulsion was probably considerably encouraged by the fashion for 'classic' simplicity which, though undoubtedly bogus and absurdly interpreted, was in theory a spirited attempt to break away from the forced stiffness and excessive decoration



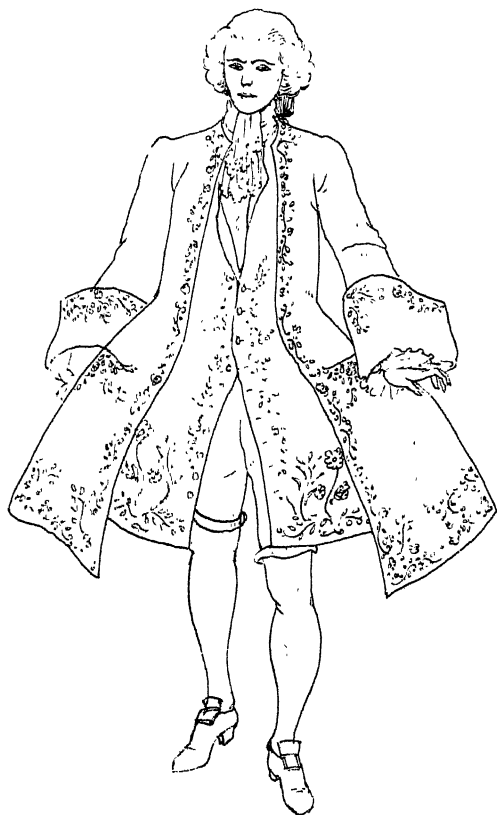
FRENCH (1710)

Fig. 61

of the seventeenth-century French Court. Every one who could read acquired a superficial knowledge of the Greek classic and mythological literature, and the simplicity of the ancient pastoral life with its naïve and charming frankness made an undoubted appeal to the minds of those who had been reared in an atmosphere of intrigue and camouflage.

The coarse realism of a peasant's life was not, however, allowed to interfere with the elegant and fragrant translation that suited the contemporary attitude. The nearest model that presented itself to the fastidious French noble was found in the decorative and colourful groupings of the strolling players. Their simple charm had been much enhanced by the paintings of Watteau and Legrand, and when once more troupes were allowed to appear in Paris, many of their costumes—which were frankly left-overs from the preceding century—were copied and worn by the classic-minded gallant and his lady.

Wigs of course were the first 'unnatural' features to be discarded, but as so many men had shorn heads for the convenience of accommodating wigs, a compromise had to be made by the wearing of a neat white wig curled in front and finishing with a queue or 'bag' behind. Others, who had not gone to the extreme of shaving their heads, wore their hair loose to the shoulder or tied back with



FRENCH (1749)

Fig. 62

a ribbon. Often the hair was powdered as a convenient camouflage if false hair had to be attached.

High heels were the next extravagance to be abandoned, and the use of jewels and metal and gold and silver embroideries was replaced by elegant floral designs embroidered on both coats and waistcoats. The rather bright and heavy colours which had been so popular a few years earlier were entirely discarded in favour of pastel tints.

Pinks, blues, yellows, mauves, cyclamen, and white were, fashionable if not practical shades. Whether it was the exquisite embroideries and designs worked on the waistcoats that encouraged gentlemen to discard their coats for informal occasions, or whether the stiffened cuffs and wired skirts of their coats were unsuited to the elegant occupation of dancing and lolling in their lovely gardens, it is impossible at this date to ascertain. Whatever the reason, there are numerous examples of the negligent fashion which displayed the beauty of the waistcoat and the frilled and elegantly gathered shirt-sleeve and cravat to the appreciative eyes of their lady friends.

The shape of the coat remained almost the same for some fifty years—wide-cuffed and full-skirted with much-embroidered pockets and no collar. It was during the 'fifties that the fullness of the skirts began to collapse, and the fashion for smaller cuffs showed the first tendency towards the complete abandonment of these features twenty years later.

About 1730 the Frenchman began to wear his knee-breeches over his stockings, rolled down to just above the knee, where previously the fashion had been to garter them just below the knee.

This new fashion led to the introduction of fancy buckles worn on the outside of the knee where previously a bow of ribbon had adorned the garter.

The simplicity of the first white wigs and powdered natural hair soon wore off, and a variety of formal arrangements that included layers of sausage-like curls at either side of the face soon became the order of the day. Many gentlemen wore their own hair long in front and powdered, brushed backward, and rolled over a wig which was cleverly hidden in the curled front-pieces. This added to



FRENCH (1779)

Fig. 63

the fashionable 'sleekness' of the back of the head, while the hair framing the face was required to curl.

Soon after 1760 the coat underwent a radical change. The front was cut back to form a curve, and while it displayed large quantities of waistcoat in front, the coat fell into flat folds at the back. Though the coat 'skirts' still remained in three separate pieces for a further eight or ten years, they were a mere apology for the skirts of a previous decade. Gradually they were cut shorter and shorter. The waistcoat, too, became shorter, until in 1770 it finished at the hips, the last few buttons being left undone to form





VENETIAN (1782)

Fig. 64

an inverted V-shape. In 1770 coats of the extreme fashion only just covered the buttocks at the back and were not visible from the front below the pockets, which had risen considerably from their original position to just below the waist.

The Frenchman's fashions of the 'seventies were even

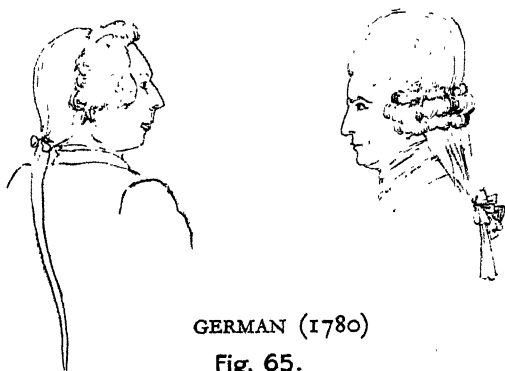




more fantastic than those of the ladies. It was at this particular period that the Macaronis made their appearance with their striped stockings, long tight knee-breeches, short coats, striped waistcoats, absurdly high cravats, and high piled wigs surmounted by a ridiculous little tricorne hat only a few inches in size.

The most striking feature of the extreme fashions of the 'seventies was the great tightness of fit and a brevity which undoubtedly gave a definite impression of a child outgrowing his clothes.

Where previously the coats had hung full and in flattering lines, they were now frequently cut away so much in the front that it was quite impossible to fasten the buttons. The sleeves were extremely tight and finished a few inches above the wrist so that the frilled shirt might still be visible. The back of the coat gave the impression of a beetle with its wings folded tightly back. Collars on coats had arrived during the 'sixties. They were, however, quite small and were sometimes worn turned up, completely covering the cravat at the back of the neck.



GERMAN (1780)

Fig. 65.

The knee-breeches, which were now so very much more exposed by the cut-away coats and short waistcoats, were worn extremely tight-fitting, and often reached several inches below the knee, being fastened with buttons.

For a few years barbers struggled to make the masculine wig and hairdressing as complicated as that of women, and several amusing exaggerations appeared in conse-



GERMAN (1780)

Fig. 66

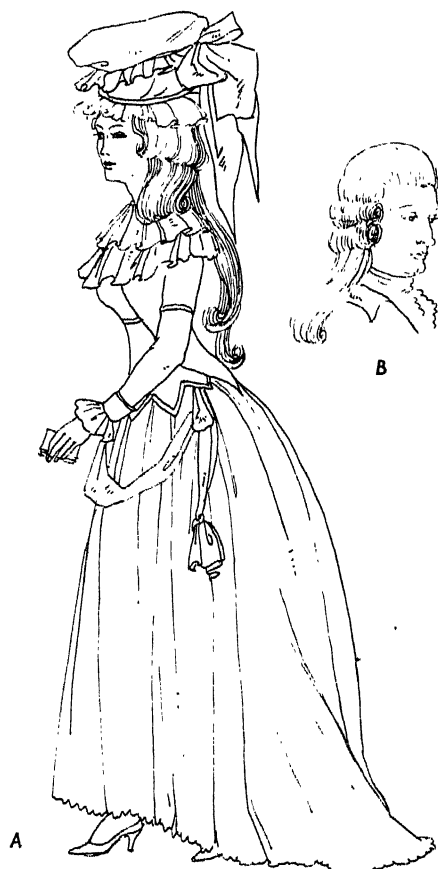
quence. Wire frames and horse-hair went to the filling out of the high wig. Layers of complicated curls were arranged at the sides and a series of loops or an exaggeratedly long queue appeared at the back. More frequently only the front part of the hair was raised, while at the back a sleekness was encouraged—which terminated in a huge bow of ribbon.

These extreme styles lasted for five or six years only, and before the 'eighties the masculine wig had assumed quite reasonable proportions. The tight, short coats had been discarded in preference to one nearly reaching to the knees. It could still be curved in front with a beetle back or remain a collapsed and elongated version of the coats of



GERMAN (1785)

Fig. 67



FRENCH (1784)

Fig. 68

the 'sixties. The collar, however, had come to stay ; and experimental cutting soon led to the introduction of *revers*. The fashion for buttoning the front of the curved coats soon suggested to the tailor a new shape. This was for the cut-away coat with tails, which made its first appear-



GERMAN (1785)  
Fig. 69





GERMAN (1786)

Fig. 70





ance during the 'eighties. We can still recognize its direct descendant in the formal evening dress of to-day.

It was during the 'eighties that yet another wave of simplicity occurred. This was fostered by Marie Antoinette's interest in the 'Arcadians'; once more this was very much of a pseudo-pastoral affair, and its effect upon the extravagances of the French Court was almost negligible. It did perhaps account for the discarding of the hoops in the ladies' skirts and the newer fashion of pannier and bustle effects which were considered to be in the shepherdess manner. Quite probably it exterminated—or helped to exterminate—the absurdly exaggerated men's fashions of the 'seventies. This pastoralism was entirely of French origin and did not materially affect other countries. Germany, in particular, after having adopted the absurdities and exaggerations of the 'seventies, found it extremely difficult to discard them, and there are many examples of the masculine high wig and the over-decorated hooped skirts being worn in Germany five or even ten years after they had been discarded in France.

Except for evening and dress occasions the richly embroidered coat had been replaced by a fashion for plain materials during the 'sixties, and so that the coat should not appear unduly severe, colours were very much brighter and stronger than they had been for some seventy years. Binding and coloured borders were quite frequently used on coats, but the chief garment to receive attention was the waistcoat, which was either striped in gay contrasting colours or embroidered all over. Colour contrasts played an important part in men's dress until the Revolution, which effectively put a stop to anything too striking or too gay and noticeable. Blacks, greys, browns, dark blues, and other drab shades were suitably inconspicuous. Wigs

were discarded, and a fashion for wearing the hair cut short to the ears in a sort of untidy bob became a simple and practical solution of masculine hairdressing. By 1790 the silks and satins, fine wigs, and rich embroideries were things of the past. The tricorne hat had been replaced by a stiff high-crowned hat with a brim curved up at each side and adorned by a large buckle in front. The cloth coat with its cut-away front and long tails displayed a handsome waistcoat and a watch-fob hanging from the watch-pocket of the trousers. Tall boots encased the stockinged legs. The whole effect—measured by modern standards—was one more masculine than had previously been secured. Certainly the clothes offered a better resistance to wind and rain, though to a generation that had been reared to silks, satins, and velvets, the cloth and linen must have seemed dreadfully plain, coarse, and homely.

As in previous centuries fashions in design and embroidery played an important part in dating certain garments. The century opened with heavy, stiff brocade, richly enhanced with jewels and gold and silver embroideries; from about 1715 the preference for fine floral embroideries on equally fine and brilliant satins and velvets became the order of the day, and for some thirty years or more coats and waistcoats were adorned with leaf-designs or flowers twined in and out upon a curled branch, which became more luxurious over pockets, on the corners of coats, and, of course, on cuffs.

The increased interest in importations from the East provoked a desire for Oriental patterns and colours during the 'forties and 'fifties, and larger designs frequently spread all over coat or waistcoat, the pattern being picked out once more in both gold and silver thread. Cut velvets, embossed satins, all-over embroidery which



FRENCH (1798)

Fig. 71

tried to copy the richly decorated coats worn by Chinese mandarins and other Eastern dignitaries were fashionable throughout Europe. The reason for the abandonment of these richly ornamented garments in preference to the tight-fitting and graceless little coats of the 'seventies is not exactly clear. Possibly it was merely due to a swing of the pendulum of fashion. Change was desired, and therefore it was found necessary to devise a shape entirely different. It certainly could not have been the outcome of a revulsion against extravagance, because the fashions of the early 'seventies were perhaps the silliest and most absurdly unpractical of all periods. Satirists devised endless pleasure and amusement from observing the stilted mincing manners of the effeminate and elegant fop dressed in towering wig and glove-like fit of coat and breeches. At this period design was limited to the edges of the coat or waistcoat, for those who still wished to flaunt embroideries, but by far the most typical pattern of the time was stripes—horizontal or vertical stripes, usually on a white ground, decorated stockings and waistcoats, sometimes even coats, though in the latter case the stripes were usually much closer together. After the 'seventies embroideries were once more fashionable for a few years, until the Revolution, which of course made such display positively dangerous. After that date design and pattern practically disappeared as a masculine feature of everyday dress, and women were left with a complete monopoly of figured materials, silks, satins, and embroideries. Dull and dark colours remained popular for men's clothes from that date to this, although the closing years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth did at least show the charm of contrast in the coloured coat and white breeches, or a black coat and coloured breeches. It was







not until seventy years later that complete uniformity of both colour and cut robbed the male of any possible display of individuality in his choice of clothing.

It was, however, during the 'nineties that the standard features of modern masculine dress were definitely established, and cloth coats became a necessary feature of everyday wear. Silks and satins were discarded as an effeminate and unmanly habit, only fit for evening dress and Court functions. This theory, which still obviously exists, can quite definitely be dated from the French Revolution, and though other countries clung for a few more years to the more cheerful and colourful materials of an earlier decade, France had definitely turned her back on all those things that had helped the aristocrat to display his wealth in his manner of dress.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE nineteenth century started with the fundamental changes in costume already made. Slim Empire gowns, shorn heads, large bonnets, and flat shoes for the ladies, and tall hats, skin-fitting breeches, tailed coats, and short waistcoats for the men.

One of the first changes of the nineteenth century was from knee-breeches to trousers. Knee-breeches had been gradually getting longer and longer, and the earliest trousers were simply very long knee-breeches—buttoning from the knee to the calf. Fashion decreed that they should be skin-tight, and quite often this form of exaggeration was carried to such an extreme that the ‘dandy’ of the period wore chamois-leather trousers which did not allow sufficient room to sit down comfortably. Breeches for ‘strolling’ were changed for a more ‘roomy’ pair when the ‘dandy’ had to take tea sitting down.

Long boots and gaiters reaching above the knee protected the stockings from the inclemencies of the weather and served for walking and riding in the still very muddy and dusty roads, but by 1810 the knee-breeches had completely disappeared, except for evening and Court wear. They were, however, still worn by those sufficiently old-fashioned to cherish a style that had become almost a tradition for over a century.

As the breeches grew longer, the collars and cravats became higher, and soon after 1810 a high stiff collar was adopted instead of the yards of material previously employed for a cravat. The cravat itself, though still worn,



(1808)  
Fig. 72

was no longer the chief form of neckwear, but had assumed the inferior position of a tie. Wound round the neck in several lengths, it tied in front in a bow over the tall wings of the stiff collar which in extreme styles came right up over the ears and reached to the cheek-bones.

The fashion for *revers* which had started several years earlier had become an absolute obsession a few years after the new century began. These were cut in all manner of shapes, but they always finished with a very high collar at the back of the coat. This emphasis on the neck gave the men of the time a curious effect of sloping shoulders, which is not really to be wondered at, considering the variety of collars, cravats, and waistcoat collars that were packed tightly up to the ears. Frilled shirts with ruffles for throat and waist were fashionable until about 1820—as long, in fact, as the cut-away coat remained open in front to reveal the waistcoat and shirt. About 1820 a new full-skirted coat which buttoned at the waist was introduced, and when this was not worn the cut-away coat was double-breasted. Trousers having become an accepted fashion—several variations from the straight cut were introduced—the most amusing and obvious of these were the peg-top trousers. These were frilled or gathered at the hips, with a tight-fitting waist, and fairly tight from knee to ankle, where they were kept down with the aid of a strap under the shoe. French styles carried the fashion to absurdity with padded and even wired-out hips. The fashion lasted with modifications from about 1820 to 1835. It was probably due to their ungainly shape that the coats had to change. The double-breasted coats of the late 'twenties had full, well-curved tails, while the skirted coats were tight-waisted and flared from the hips to below the knees. The peg-top trousers never became evening wear.

The skin-fitting trousers, reaching to within a few inches of the ankle and accentuating the curve of the calf, were always worn for dancing until well into the 'thirties.

The man's hat, which for so long had been a standard tricorne, when once changed, went through a variety of shapes and sizes until eventually it settled down into the accepted 'top hat' of the nineteenth century.

Probably the most obvious of these transitional styles were the cocked hat of the early years of the century and the huge curled-brimmed 'topper' of the 'twenties or the tall 'chimney-pot' type which found favour from about 1820 to 1840. One of the old fashions that still clung included the 'caped' coat, or highwayman's cloak, which served so useful a purpose in protecting the wearer's shoulders from rain that it was worn by coachmen for several decades after it had disappeared from the average wardrobe.

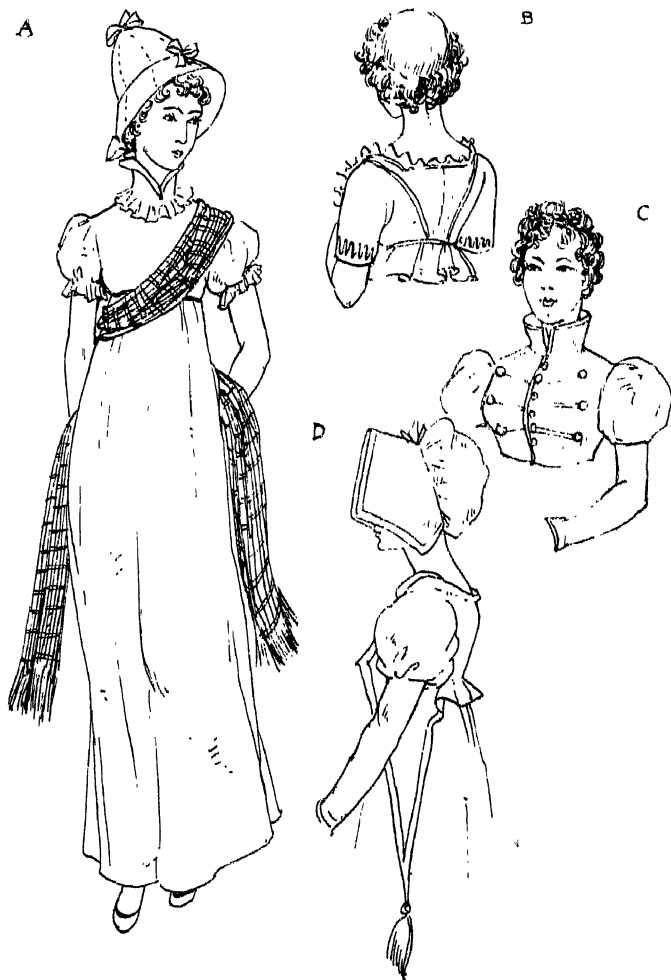
By 1840 all the familiar appurtenances of the twentieth-century gentleman had made their appearance—the trousers, short waistcoat, cloth coat, shirt, stiff collar, tie, and top hat!

Although it appears at first glance that women's clothes made such striking changes during the first forty years of the nineteenth century, the changes



FRENCH (1807)

Fig. 73



FRENCH (1807)  
Fig. 74





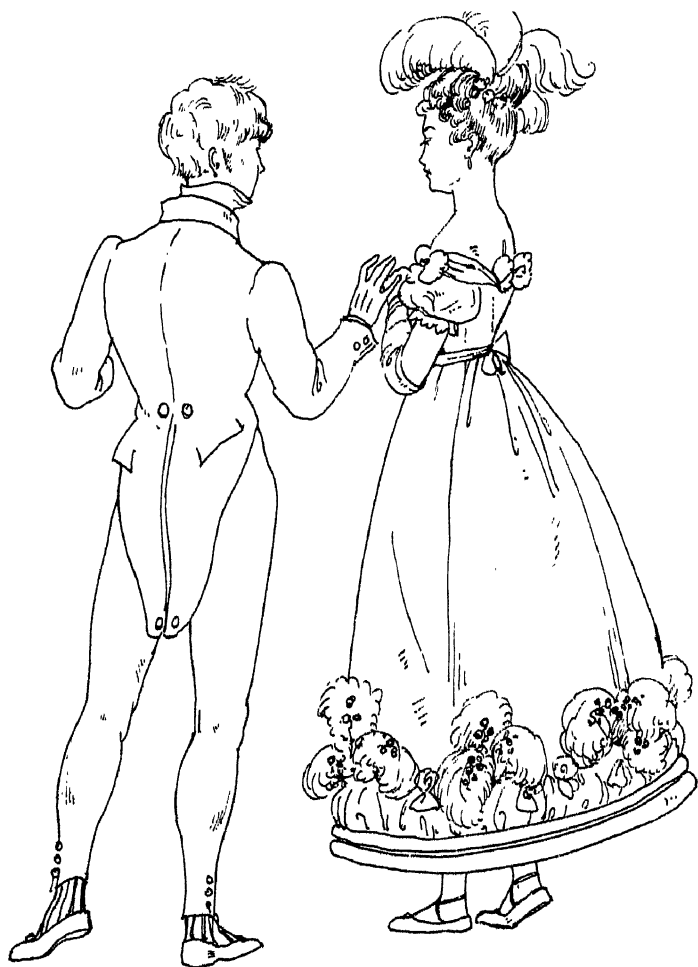




FRENCH (1817)

Fig. 75

were gradual. Skirts slowly shortened and became wider at the hems. The high waist-line dropped gently, an inch at a time, until, about twenty-five years after the beginning of the century, it had once more reached the normal position.



FRENCH (1823)

Fig. 76



FRENCH (1824)  
Fig. 77

Hairdressing probably showed the most striking changes, because for some fifteen years the hair had been worn short, and then after various experiments it appeared in the fantastic styles of the early 'thirties, piled high and knotted into absurd shapes, decorated with flowers and ribbons, lace, and pearls. For just one decade it was held up by wire frames and embellished with false switches. Then the fashion collapsed as suddenly as it had appeared, and was replaced by the sober middle parting and bobbing curls of the late 'thirties.

The clinging pseudo-Greek lines of the early Empire gown had changed into rather an unsophisticated little-girl dress by about 1805. High-waisted and with skirts above the ankles, gathered at the waist, puffed sleeves, flat shoes, a large bonnet, and the merest apology for a coat all made a becoming fashion for the very young, but the older woman must have welcomed the fuller-skirted, high-necked, and longer-sleeved gowns of ten years later. Between 1815 and 1823 a perfectly delightful phase of fashion existed. Skirts were full at the bottom and worn just off the ground, waists were still high, but not too high. A military fashion favoured cords and frogs as trimmings; large, feathered



FRENCH (1824)

Fig. 78



(1828)

Fig. 79

bonnets and hats were also rather military in style. Hair-dressing was simple and favoured natural charm. There was no shadow of the absurdities of the late 'twenties visible until about 1824, when tight-lacing became obvious.

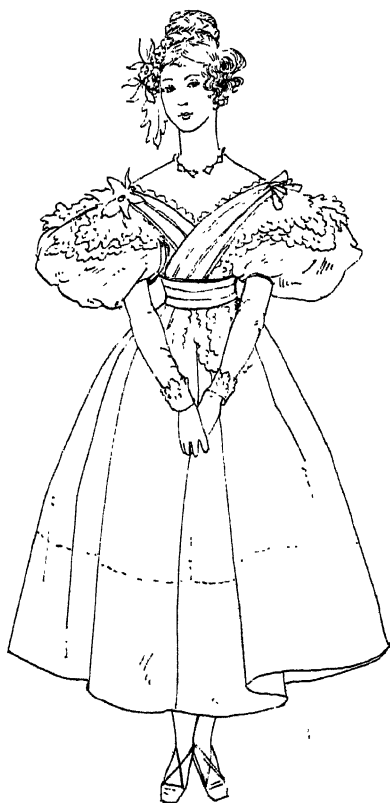
One of fashion's inevitable demands is that when the waist is constricted the shoulders must be padded and



FRENCH (1830)

Fig. 80

wired and the skirts must shoot out from the tiny waist as quickly and as briefly as possible! By 1830 shoulders had become monstrosities in their excess of padding. Ruffles had appeared to cover the neck. Huge hats bearing every conceivable ribbon, flower, fruit, and feather were balanced precariously on the towering curled confection of hairdressing that had supplanted any attempts at natural charm. Skirts were short, displaying the boot and perhaps



FRENCH (1832)

Fig. 81

even an inch or so of stocking, and very, very full. No hoop had yet been inserted, but stiffened petticoats and crino-zephyr, which was a sort of horse-hair tissue, were usually worn.

Starch played a very important and uncomfortable part in the laundering of the 'thirties. Starched ruffles, cuffs, collars, and petticoats were indispensable, and the gigantic puffed sleeves were often assisted by wire supports or little feather pillows.



However, by about 1838 these absurd excesses had died down in the eventual adoption of the crinoline silhouette, which was to be popular for so many years. The tight-fitting bodice, huge hooped skirt, shawl, and poke-bonnet, so dear to the heart of the romanticist and to the designer of Christmas cards—all these had arrived to stay for a quarter of a century.

During the early years of the nineteenth century ladies wore the palest of colours, white and pastel shades being great favourites, but soon after 1810 purples, deep reds, golds, and violent blues became extremely fashionable for little coats, hats, and scarves, and by 1820 colour was brilliant and striking for practically every costume or occasion.

Even the dinner-gowns and ball-dresses were of dark or bright colours. Heaviness was seen, not only in cut and design, but in everything. Plaids and large patters were particularly fashionable during the 'thirties, although there was also a temporary craze for them as early as 1810.

As has already been mentioned, colour was fast fading from the wardrobe of the male. Deep greens, dark blue, brown, and of course black were all popular for coats; trousers were nearly always of a lighter shade. Reds, violets, yellows, and pinks had completely vanished, except for an occasional waistcoat, as early as 1810.

A few colours were still to be seen in the ballrooms—in embroidered satin coats—but by about 1825 even dress-wear, the last stronghold of masculine elegance, was eventually overcome by the strength of neutrality—and the fine peacock that graced the ballrooms of the eighteenth century was replaced by the penguin of the nineteenth and twentieth.





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